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LA FRANCE

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“ High-explosive ! ”

“ A geyser of earth and smoke shot high into the air. Then an explosion which was brother to an earthquake.”

VIVE LA FRANCE

BY
E. ALEXANDER POWELL

Author of "Fighting in Flanders," etc.

ILLUSTRATED

LONDON



WILLIAM HEINEMANN

London: William Heinemann, 1916

TO
FRANCE

WHOSE COURAGE, SERENITY, AND
SACRIFICES, IN A CONFLICT WHICH
SHE DID NOTHING TO PROVOKE, HAVE
WON HER THE SYMPATHY, RESPECT
AND ADMIRATION OF THE WORLD

AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

FOR the assistance they have given me, and for the innumerable kindnesses they have shown me, I welcome this opportunity of expressing my thanks and appreciation to his Excellency Jean Adrien Antoine Jules Jusserand, French Ambassador to the United States ; to Lord Northcliffe, owner of the *Times* and the *Daily Mail* ; to Ralph Pulitzer, Esq., president, and C. M. Lincoln, Esq., managing editor, of the *New York World* ; to Major-General Ryerson, of the Canadian Overseas Contingent ; to Captain Count Gérard de Ganay, who was my companion from end to end of the Western battle-line ; to Messrs. Ponsot, Alexis Leger, and Henri Hoppenot, of the Bureau de la Presse ; to Lieutenant-Colonel Spencer Cosby, military attaché of the American Embassy in Paris ; to Captain John W. Barker, of the American Military Mission in France ;

viii AN ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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E. ALEXANDER POWELL

HÔTEL DE CRILLON, PARIS

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I. IN THE FIELD WITH THE FRENCH

BEFORE going to France I was told that the French were very stingy with their war. I was told that the only fighting I would be permitted to see would be on moving-picture screens. I was assured that war correspondents were about as welcome as the small-pox. But I found that I had been misinformed. So far as I am concerned they have been as generous with their war as a Kentucky colonel is with mint-juleps. They have, in fact, been so willing to let me get close up to where things were happening that, on one or two occasions, it looked as though I would never see the Statue of Liberty again. I do not wish to give the impression, however, that these facilities for flirting with sudden death are handed out promiscuously to all who apply for them. To obtain me permission to see the French fighting-machine in action required the united influence of three Cabinet Ministers, a British

peer, two ambassadors, a score of newspapers—and the patience of Job.

Unless you have attempted to pierce it, it is impossible to comprehend the marvellous veil of secrecy which the Allied Governments have cast over their military operations. I wonder if you, who will read this, realize that, though the German trenches can be reached by motor-car in ninety minutes from the Rue de la Paix, it is as impossible for an unauthorized person to get within sound, much less within sight, of them as it would be for a tourist to stroll into Buckingham Palace and have a friendly chat with King George. The good old days in Belgium, when the correspondents went flitting light-heartedly about the zone of operations on bicycles and in taxicabs and motor-cars, have passed, never to return. Imagine a battle in which more men were engaged and the results of which were more momentous than Waterloo, Gettysburg, and Sedan combined—a battle in which Europe lost more men than the North lost in the whole of the Civil War—being fought at, let us say, Manchester, in December, and the people of London and Edinburgh not knowing

the details of that battle, the names of the regiments engaged, the losses, or, indeed, the actual result, until the following March. It is, in fact, not the slightest exaggeration to say that the people of Europe knew more about the wars that were fought on the South African veldt and on the Manchurian steppes than they do about this, the greatest of all wars, which is being fought literally at their front doors. So that when a correspondent does succeed in penetrating the veil of mystery, when he obtains permission to see with his own eyes something of what is happening on that five-hundred-mile-long slaughter-house and cess-pool combined which is called "the front," he has every excuse for self-congratulation.

When the Ministry of War had reluctantly issued me the little yellow card, with my photograph pasted on it, which, so far as this war is concerned, is the equivalent of Aladdin's lamp and the magic carpet put together, and I had become for the time being the guest of the nation, my path was everywhere made smooth before me. I was ciceroned by a staff-officer in a beautiful sky-blue uniform, and other officers were waiting to explain things to me

in the various divisions through which we passed. We travelled by motor-car, with a pilot-car ahead and a luggage-car behind, and we went so fast that it took two people to tell about it, one to shout " Here they come ! " and another, " There they go ! "

Leaving Paris, white and beautiful in the spring sunshine, behind us, we tore down the historic highway which still bears the title of the Route de Flandre, down which countless thousands of other men had hastened, in bygone centuries, to the fighting in the north. The houses of the city thinned and disappeared, and we came to open fields across which writhed, like monstrous yellow serpents, the zigzag lines of trenches. The whole countryside from the Aisne straight away to the walls of Paris is one vast network of trenches and barbed-wire entanglements, and, even in the improbable event of the enemy breaking through the present line, he would be little better off than he was before. The fields between the trenches were being ploughed by women, driving sleek white oxen, but the furrows were scarcely ever straight, for every few yards they would turn aside to avoid a turf-covered mound



French trenches in the sand-dunes of the Belgian littoral

Here begins that four-hundred-mile-long line of trenches which stretches across Europe like a monstrous and deadly snake



The watch on the Aisne

“On that four hundred-mile-long slaughter-house and cesspool combined which is called ‘the front.’”

surmounted by a rude cross and a scarlet kepi. For half a hundred miles this portion of France is one vast cemetery, for it was here that von Kluck made his desperate attempt to break through to Paris, and it was here that Joffre, in the greatest battle of all time, drove the German legions back across the Marne and ended their dream of entering the French capital. We whirled through villages whose main streets are lined with the broken, blackened shells of what had once been shops and dwellings. At once I felt at home, for with this sort of thing I had grown only too familiar in Belgium during the earlier days of the war. But here the Germans were either careless or in a hurry, for they had left many buildings standing. In Belgium they made a more finished job of it. Nothing better illustrates the implicit confidence which the French people have in their army, and in its ultimate success, than the fact that in all these towns through which we passed the people were hard at work rebuilding their shattered homes, though the strokes of their hammers were echoed by the sullen boom of German cannon. To me there was something approaching the

sublime in these impoverished peasants turning with stout hearts and smiling faces to the rebuilding of their homes and the retilling of their fields. To these patient, toilworn men and women I lift my hat in respect and admiration. They, no less than their sons and husbands and brothers in the trenches, are fighting the battles of France.

As we approached the front the traditional brick-red trousers and kepis still worn by the second-line men gave way to the new uniform of silvery blue—the colour of early morning. There were soldiers everywhere. Every town and hamlet through which we passed was alive with them. The highways were choked with troops of all arms ; cuirassiers, with their mediæval steel helmets and breastplates linen-covered ; dragoons, riding under thickets of gleaming lances ; zouaves in short blue jackets and baggy red breeches ; spahis in turbans and Senegalese in tarbooshes and Moroccans in burnouses ; *chasseurs d'Afrique* in sky-blue and scarlet ; infantry of the line in all the shades of blue that can be produced by dyes and by the weather ; mile-long strings of motor transports ; field batteries ; pon-

toon trains ; balloon corps ; ambulances with staring scarlet crosses painted on their canvas covers—all the nuts and bolts and springs and screws which go to compose what has become, after months of testing and improvements, as efficient a killing machine as the world has ever seen. And it is, I am convinced, eventually going to do the business. It struck me as having all, or nearly all, of the merits of the German organization *with the human element added*.

When only a short distance in the rear of the firing-line we left the car and proceeded on foot down a winding country road which debouched quite suddenly into a great, saucer-shaped valley. Its gentle slopes were chequered with the brown squares of fresh-ploughed fields and the green ones of sprouting grain. From beyond a near-by bridge came the mutter of artillery, and every now and then there appeared against the turquoise sky what looked like a patch of cotton-wool but was in reality bursting shrapnel. The far end of the valley was filled with what appeared at first glance to be a low-hanging cloud of grey-blue mist, but which, as we drew nearer, resolved itself

into dense masses of troops drawn up in review formation—infantry at the left, cavalry at the right, and guns in the centre. I had heard much of the invisible qualities of the new field uniform of the French Army, but I had heretofore believed it to be greatly inferior to the German greenish grey. But I have changed my mind. At three hundred yards twenty thousand men could scarcely be distinguishable from the landscape. The only colourful note was struck by the dragoons, who still retain their suicidal uniform of scarlet breeches, blue tunic, and the helmet with its horse-tail plume, though a concession has been made to practicality by covering the latter with tan linen. The majority of the French woollen mills being in the region held by the Germans, it has been possible to provide only a portion of the army with the new uniform. As a result of this shortage of cloth, thousands of soldiers have had recourse to the loose corduroy trousers common among the peasantry, while for the territorials almost any sort of a jacket will pass muster provided it is of a neutral colour and has the regimental numerals on the collar. Those soldiers who can afford to

provide their own uniforms almost invariably have them made of khaki, cut after the more practical British pattern, with cap-covers of the same material. Owing to this latitude in the matter of clothing, the French army during the first year of the war presented an extraordinarily variegated and nondescript appearance, though this lack of uniformity is gradually being remedied.

At three o'clock a rolling cloud of dust suddenly appeared on the road from Compiègne, and out of it tore a long line of military cars, travelling at express-train speed. All save one were in war coats of elephant grey. The exception was a low-slung racer painted a canary-yellow. Tearing at top speed up the valley, it came to a sudden stop before the centre of the mile-long line of soldiery. A mile of fighting men stiffened to attention; a mile of rifle barrels formed a hedge of burnished steel; the drums gave the long roll and the thirteen ruffles; the colours swept the ground; the massed bands burst into the splendid strains of the *Marseillaise*, and a little man, grey-moustached, grey-bearded, inclined to stoutness, but with the unmistakable carriage

of a soldier, descended from the yellow car and, followed by a staff in uniforms of light blue, of dark blue, of tan, of green, of scarlet, walked briskly down the motionless lines. I was having the unique privilege of seeing a President of France reviewing a French army almost within sight of the invader and actually within sound of his guns. It was under almost parallel circumstances that, upward of half a century ago, on the banks of the Rappahannock, another President of another mighty republic reviewed another army, which was likewise fighting the battles of civilization.

Raymond Poincaré is by no means an easy man to describe. He is the only French President within my memory who looks the part of ruler. In his person are centred, as it were, the aspirations of France, for he is a native of Lorraine. He was a captain of Alpine Chasseurs in his younger days and shows the result of his military training in his erect and vigorous bearing. Were you to see him apart from his official surroundings you might well take him, with his air of energy and authority, for a great employer or a captain of industry. Take twenty years from the age

of Andrew Carnegie, trim his beard to a point, throw his shoulders back and his chest out, and you will have as good an idea as I can give you of the war-time President of France.

At the President's right walked a thick-set, black-moustached man whose rather shabby blue serge suit and broad-brimmed black slouch hat were in strange contrast to the brilliant uniforms about him. Yet this man in the wrinkled suit, with the unmilitary bearing, exercised more power than the President and all the officers who followed him; a word from him could make or break generals, could move armies; he was Millerand, War Minister of France.

After passing down the lines and making a minute inspection of the soldiers and their equipment, the President took his stand in front of the grouped standards, and the officers and men who were to be decorated for gallantry ranged themselves before him, some with bandaged heads, some with their arms in slings, one hobbling painfully along on crutches. Stepping forward, as the Minister of War read off their names from a list, the President pinned to the tunic of each man

the coveted bit of ribbon and enamel and kissed him on either cheek, while the troops presented arms and the massed bands played the anthem. On general principles I should think that the President would rebel at having to kiss so many men, even though they are heroes and have been freshly shaved for the occasion.

I might mention in passing that the decoration most highly prized by the French soldier is not, as is popularly supposed, the Legion of Honour, which, like the Iron Cross, has greatly depreciated because of its wholesale distribution (it is the policy of the German military authorities, I believe, to give the Iron Cross to one in every twenty men), but the *Médaille Militaire*, which, like the Victoria Cross and the Prussian decoration, *Pour le Merite*, is awarded only for deeds of the most conspicuous bravery. The *Médaille Militaire*, moreover, can be won only by privates and non-commissioned officers or by generals, though the *Croix de Guerre*, the little bronze cross which signifies that the wearer has been mentioned in despatches, is awarded to all ranks and occasionally to women, among the



The taking of Neuville St. Vaast. French infantry engaged in house-to-house fighting



French infantry going into action

"These were the famous *poilus*, the bearded ones, the men with hair on their chests . . . a moving cloud of greyish blue under shifting, shimmering, slanting lines of steel."

décorées being Madame Alexis Carrel, the wife of the famous surgeon.

The picturesque business of recognizing the brave being concluded, the review of the troops began. Topping a rise, they swept down upon us in line of column—a moving cloud of greyish blue under shifting, shimmering, slanting lines of steel. Company after company, regiment after regiment, brigade after brigade, swept past, businesslike as a locomotive, implacable as a trip-hammer, irresistible as a steam-roller, moving with mechanical precision to the exultant strains of the march of the Sambre et Meuse. These were the famous *poilus*, the bearded ones, the men with hair on their chests. Their uniforms were not immaculate. They were faded by wind and rain and sometimes stained with blood. On their boots was the mud of the battle-fields along the Aisne. Fresh from the trenches though they were, they were as pink-cheeked as athletes, and they marched with the buoyancy of men in high spirits and in perfect health. Here before me was a section of that wall of steel which stands unbroken between Western Europe and the Teutonic hordes. Hard on

the heels of the infantry came the guns—the famous “75’s”—a dozen batteries, well horsed and well equipped, at a spanking trot. A little space to let the foot and guns get out of the way, and then we heard the wild, shrill clangour of the cavalry trumpets pealing the charge. Over the rise they came, helmeted giants on gigantic horses. The earth shook beneath their gallop. The scarlet breeches of the riders gleamed fiery in the sunlight ; the horsehair plumes of the helmets floated out behind ; the upraised sword-blades formed a forest of glistening steel. As they went thundering past us in a whirlwind of dust and colour they rose in their stirrups, and high above the clank of steel and the trample of hoofs came the deep-mouthed Gallic battle-cry : “ *Vive la France ! Vive la France !* ”

To have had a battery of French artillery go into action and pour a torrent of steel-cased death upon the enemy’s trenches for one’s special benefit is, so far as I am aware, a courtesy which the General Staff has seen fit to extend to no other correspondent. That the guns were of the new 105-millimetre model, which are claimed to be as much superior to

the "75's" as the latter are to all other field artillery, made the exhibition all the more interesting. The road which we had to take in order to reach this particular battery leads for several miles across an open plateau within full view of the German positions. As we approached this danger zone the staff-officer who accompanied me spoke to our driver, who opened up the throttle, and we took that stretch of exposed highway as a frightened cat takes the top of a backyard fence. "Merely a matter of precaution," explained my companion. "Sometimes when the Germans see a car travelling along this road they send a few shells across in the hope of getting a general. There's no use in taking unnecessary chances." Though I didn't say so, it struck me that I was in considerably more danger from the driving than I was from a German shell.

Leaving the car in the shelter of the ridge on which the battery was posted, we ascended the steep hillside on foot. I noticed that the slope we were traversing was pitted with miniature craters, any one of which was large enough to hold a barrel. "It might be as well to hurry across here," the artillery officer

who was acting as our guide casually remarked. "Last evening the Germans dropped eight hundred shells on this field that we are crossing, and one never knows, of course, when they will do it again."

Part way up the slope we entered what appeared to be a considerable grove of young trees. Upon closer inspection, however, I discovered that it was not a natural grove but an artificial one, hundreds of saplings having been brought from elsewhere and set upright in the ground. Soon I saw the reason, for in a little cleared space in the heart of this imitation wood, mounted on what looked not unlike gigantic step-ladders, were two field-guns with their muzzles pointing skyward. "These guns are for use against aircraft," explained the officer in charge. "The German airmen are constantly trying to locate our batteries, and in order to discourage their inquisitiveness we've put these guns in position." The guns were of the regulation *soixante-quinze* pattern, but so elevated that the wheels were at the height of a man's head from the ground, the barrels thus being inclined at such an acute angle that, by means of a sort of turntable on

which the platforms were mounted, the gunners were able to sweep the sky. "This," said the artillery officer, calling my attention to a curious-looking instrument, "is the telemeter. By means of it we are able to obtain the exact altitude of the aircraft at which we are firing, and thus know at what elevation to set our guns. It is as simple as it is ingenious. There are two apertures, one for each eye. In one the aircraft is seen right side up ; in the other it is inverted. By turning this thumbscrew the images are brought together. When one is superimposed exactly over the other the altitude is shown in metres on this dial below. Then we open on the airman with shrapnel." Since these guns were placed in position the German air-scouts have found it extremely hazardous to play peep-a-boo from the clouds.

A few minutes walk along the ridge brought us to the battery of 105's, which was the real object of our visit. The guns were not posted on the summit of the ridge, as a layman might suppose, but a quarter of a mile behind it, so that the ridge itself, a dense forest, and the river Aisne intervened between the battery and the German position. The guns were

sunk in pits so ingeniously masked with shrubs and branches that the keenest-eyed airman, flying low overhead, would have seen nothing to arouse his suspicions. Fifty feet away one could detect nothing about that apparently innocent clump of tangled vegetation to suggest that it concealed an amazing quantity of potential death. This battery had been here through the winter, and the gunners had utilized the time, which hung heavy on their hands, in making themselves comfortable and in beautifying their surroundings. With the taste and ingenuity so characteristic of the French, they had transformed their battery into a sylvan grotto. The earthen walls of the gun-pits were kept in place by deftly woven wattles and the paths leading to them had borders of white sand, on which were patriotic mottoes in coloured pebbles. Scattered about were ingeniously constructed rustic seats and tables. Within ten feet of one of the great grey guns a bed of hyacinths made the air heavy with their fragrance. The next gun-pit was banked about with yellow crocus. Hanging from the arbour which shielded another of the steel monsters were baskets made



French 155-millimetre gun shelling the German trenches on the Aisne

"The guns were so ingeniously masked that fifty feet away one could detect nothing about that apparently innocent clump of tangled vegetation to suggest that it concealed an amazing quantity of potential death."



French artillery officers, in an observatory on the Aisne, watching the effect of shell-fire on the German trenches

"From these secret *observatoires* the French observers keep an unceasing watch on the movements of the enemy and, by means of telephones, direct and control the fire of their own batteries with incredible accuracy."

of moss and bark, in which were growing violets. At a rustic table, under a sort of pergola, a soldier was painting a picture in water-colours. It was a good picture. I saw it afterward on exhibition in the Salon des Humoristes in Paris. A few yards behind each gun-emplacement were cave-like shelters, dug in the hillside, in which the men sleep, and in which they take refuge during the periodic shell-storms which visit them. Those into which I went were warm and dry and not at all uncomfortable. Over the entrance to one of these troglodyte dwellings was a sign announcing that it was the Villa des Roses.

"Do the Germans know the position of these guns?" I asked the battery commander.

"Not exactly, though they have, of course, a pretty general idea."

"Then you are not troubled by German shells," I remarked.

"Indeed we are," was the answer. "Though they have not been able to locate us exactly, they know that we are somewhere at the back of this ridge, so every now and then they attempt to clear us out by means of progressive

fire. That is, they start in at the summit, and by gradually increasing the elevation of their guns, systematically sweep the entire reverse slope of the ridge, so that some of their shells are almost certain to drop in on us. Do you appreciate, however, that, though we have now been in this same position for nearly six months, though not a day goes by that we are not under fire, and though a number of my men have been killed and wounded, we have never seen the target at which we are firing and we have never seen a German soldier ? ”

A ten-minute walk across the open table-land which lay in front of the battery, and which forms the summit of the ridge, then through a dense bit of forest, and we found ourselves at the entrance to one of those secret *observatoires* from which the French observers keep an unceasing watch on the movements of the enemy, and by means of telephones, control the fire of their own batteries with incredible accuracy. This particular *observatoire* occupied the mouth of a cave on the precipitous hillside above the Aisne, being rendered invisible by a cleverly arranged screen of bushes. Pinned to the earthen walls were

contour maps and fire-control charts ; powerful telescopes mounted on tripods brought the German trenches across the river so close to us that, had a German soldier being incautious enough to show himself, we could almost have seen the spike upon his helmet ; and a military telephonist with receivers clamped to his ears sat at a switchboard and pushed buttons or pulled out pegs just as the telephone girls do in London hotels. The chief difference was that this operator, instead of ordering a bell-hop to take ice-water and writing-paper to Room 511, would tell the commander of a battery, four or five or six miles away, to send over to a German trench, which he would designate by number, a few rounds of shrapnel or high explosive.

An officer in a smart uniform of dark blue with the scarlet facings of the artillery beckoned to me to come forward, and indicated a small opening in the screen of branches.

“ Look through there,” he said, “ but please be extremely careful not to show yourself or to shake the branches. That hillside opposite us is dotted with the enemy’s *observatoires*, just as this hillside is dotted with ours, and

they are constantly sweeping this ridge with powerful glasses in the hope of spotting us and shelling us out. Thus far they've not been able to locate us. We've had better luck, however. We've located two of their fire-control stations, and put them out of business."

As I was by no means anxious to have a storm of shrapnel bursting about my head, I was careful not to do anything which might attract the attention of a German with a telescope glued to his eye. Peering cautiously through the opening in the screen of bushes, I find myself looking down upon the winding course of the Aisne ; to the south-west I could catch a glimpse of the pottery roofs of Soissons, while from the farther bank of the river rose the gentle slopes which formed the opposite side of the river valley. These slopes were everywhere slashed and scarred by zigzag lines of yellow which I knew to be the German trenches. But, though I knew that those trenches sheltered an invading army, not a sign of life was to be seen. Barring a few black-and-white cows grazing contentedly in a pasture, the landscape was absolutely deserted. There was something strangely oppres-

sive and uncanny about this great stretch of fertile countryside, dotted here and there with white-walled cottages and clumps of farm buildings, but with not a single human being to be seen. On the other side of the opposite ridge I knew that the German batteries were posted, just as the French guns were stationed out of sight at the back of the ridge on which I stood. This artillery warfare is, after all, only a gigantic edition of the old-fashioned game of hide-and-seek; the chief difference being that when you catch sight of your opponent, instead of saying politely, "I see you!" you try to kill him with a three-inch shell.

A soldier set a tripod in position and on it carefully adjusted a powerful telescope. The colonel motioned me to look through it, and suddenly the things that had looked like sinuous yellow lines became recognizable as marvellously constructed earthworks.

"Now," said the colonel, "focus your glass on that trench just above the ruined farmhouse and I will show you what our gunners can do." After consulting a chart with innumerable radiating blue and scarlet lines

which was pinned to a drafting-table, and making some hasty calculations with a pencil, he gave a few curt orders to a junior officer who sat at a telephone switchboard with receivers clamped to his ears. The young officer spoke some cabalistic figures into the transmitter and concluded with the order : "*Tir rapide.*"

"Now, Monsieur Powell," called the colonel, "watch the trenches." A moment later, from somewhere behind the ridge at the back of us, came in rapid succession six splitting crashes—*bang! bang! bang! bang! bang! bang!* A fraction of a second later I saw six puffs of black smoke suddenly appear against one of the yellow lines on the distant hillside ; six fountains of earth shot high into the air.

"Right into the trenches !" exclaimed the colonel, who was kneeling beside me with his glasses glued to his eyes. "Watch once more." Again six splitting crashes, six distant puffs of smoke, and, floating back to us a moment later, six muffled detonations.

"The battery that has just fired is four miles from those trenches," remarked the colonel casually. "Not so bad, eh ?"

"It's marvellous," I answered, but all the

time I was wondering how many lives had been snuffed out for my benefit that morning on the distant hillside, how many men with whom I have no quarrel had been maimed for life, how many women had been left husbandless, how many children fatherless.

"I do not wish to hasten your departure, Monsieur Powell," apologized the colonel, "but if you wish to get back to your car without annoyance, I think that you had better be starting. We've stirred up the Boches, and at any moment now their guns may begin to answer."

He knew what he was talking about, did that colonel. In fact, we had delayed our departure too long, for just as we reached the edge of the wood, and started across the open plateau which crowns the summit, something hurtled through the air above the tree-tops with a sound between a moan and a snarl and exploded with a crash like a thousand cannon crackers set off together a few yards in front of us. Before the echoes of the first had time to die away came another and yet another. They burst to the right of us, to the left of us, seemingly all around us. We certainly had

stirred up the Germans. For a few minutes we were in a very warm corner, and I am no stranger to shell-fire, either. At first we decided to make a dash for it across the plateau, but a shell which burst in the undergrowth not thirty feet ahead induced us to change our minds, and we precipitately retreated to the nearest bomb-proof. The next half-hour we spent snugly and securely several feet below the surface of the earth, while shrapnel whined overhead like bloodhounds seeking their prey. Have you ever heard shrapnel by any chance ? No ? Well, it sounds as much as anything else like a winter gale howling through the branches of a pine-tree. It is a moan, a groan, a shriek, and a wail rolled into one, and when the explosion comes it sounds as though some one had touched off a stick of dynamite under a grand piano. And it is not particularly cheering to know that the ones you hear do not harm you, and that it is the ones you do not have time to hear that send you to the cemetery. The French artillery officers tell me that the German ammunition has noticeably deteriorated of late. Well, perhaps. Still, I hadn't noticed it. It was

thirty minutes before the storm of shrapnel slackened and it was safe to start for the car. We had a mile of open field to cross with shells still occasionally falling. I felt like a man wearing a silk hat who has just passed a gang of boys engaged in making snowballs. In a lifetime largely made up of interesting experiences that exhibition of French gunnery will always stand out as one of the most interesting things I have ever seen. But all the way back to headquarters I kept wondering about those men in the trenches where the shells had fallen, and about the women and children who are waiting and watching and praying for them over there across the Rhine.

I had expressed a wish to visit Soissons, and, upon communicating with division headquarters, permission was granted and the necessary orders issued. Before we started, however, I was told quite frankly that the military authorities accepted no responsibility for the consequences of the proposed excursion, for, though the town was in the possession of the French, it was under almost constant bombardment by the Germans. In order to get the setting of the picture clearly

in your mind, you must picture two parallel ranges of hills, separated by a wonderfully fertile valley, perhaps three miles in width, down which meanders, with many twists and hairpin turns, the silver ribbon which is the Aisne. On its north bank, at a gentle bend in the river, stands the quaint old town of Soissons, so hoary with antiquity that its earlier history is lost in the mists of tradition. Of its normal population of fifteen thousand, when I was there only a few score remained, and those only because they had no other place to go.

A sandstone ridge which rises abruptly from the south bank of the river directly opposite Soissons was held by the French, and from its shelter their batteries spat unceasing defiance at the Germans, under General von Heeringen, whose trenches lined the heights on the other side of the river and immediately behind the town. From dawn to dark and often throughout the night, the screaming messengers of death crisscrossed above the red-tiled roofs of Soissons and served to make things interesting for the handful of inhabitants who remained. Every now and then the

German gunners, apparently for no reason save pure deviltry, would drop a few shells into the middle of the town. They argued, no doubt, that it would keep the townsfolk from becoming ennuied and give them something to occupy their minds.

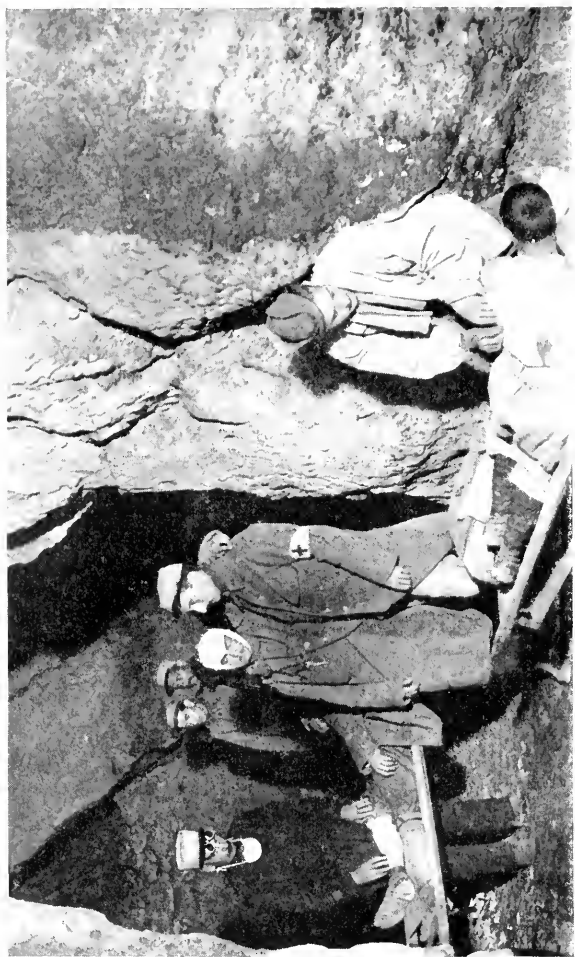
The ridge on the French side of the river is literally honeycombed with quarries, tunnels, and caverns, many of these subterranean chambers being as large and as curiously formed as the grottoes in the Mammoth Cave. Being weatherproof as well as shell-proof, the French had turned them to excellent account, utilizing them for barracks, ammunition stores, fire-control stations, hospitals, and even stables. In fact, I can recall few stranger sights than that of a long line of helmeted horsemen, comprising a whole squadron of dragoons, disappearing into the mouth of one of these caverns like a gigantic snake crawling into its lair.

Leaving the car three miles from the outskirts of Soissons, we made our way through dense undergrowth up a hillside until we came quite unexpectedly upon the yawning mouth of a tunnel, which, I surmised, passed completely under the backbone of the ridge.

Groping our way for perhaps an eighth of a mile through inky blackness, we suddenly emerged, amid a blinding glare of sunlight, into just such another observing station as we had visited that morning farther up the Aisne. This *observatoire*, being in the mouth of the tunnel, could not be seen from above, while a screen of branches and foliage concealed it from the German observers across the river. The officer in command at this point was anxious to give us a demonstration of the accuracy with which his gunners could land on the German solar plexus, but when he learned that we were going into the town he changed his mind.

“They’ve been quiet all day,” he explained, “and if you are going across the river it’s just as well not to stir them up. You’ll probably get a little excitement in any event, for the Boches usually shell the town for an hour or so at sunset before knocking off for supper. We call it ‘The Evening Prayer.’ ”

Slipping through an opening in the screen of foliage which masked the *observatoire*, we found ourselves at the beginning of a *boyau*, or communication trench, which led diagonally



The caves and grottoes in the cliffs along the Aisne are utilized for first-aid dressing-stations



Zouaves carrying a German position in the Belgian sand-dunes by storm

down the face of the hillside to the river. Down this we went, sometimes on hands and knees and always stooping, for as long as we were on the side of the hill we were within sight of the German positions, and to have shown our heads above the trench would have attracted the bullets of the German sharpshooters. And a second is long enough for a bullet to do its business. Emerging from the *boyau* at the foot of the hill, we crossed the river by an ancient stone bridge and for a mile or more followed a cobble-paved high road which ran between rows of workmen's cottages which had been wrecked by shell-fire. Some had shattered roofs and the plastered walls of others were pockmarked with bullets, for here the fighting had been desperate and bloody. But over the garden walls strayed blossom-laden branches of cherry, peach, and apple trees. The air was heavy with their fragrance. Black-and-white cattle grazed contentedly knee-deep in lush green grass. Pigeons cooed and chattered on the housetops. By an open window an old woman with a large white cat in her lap sat knitting. As she knitted she looked out across the blossoming hillsides to

the sky-line where the invaders lay entrenched and waiting. I wondered what she was thinking about. She must have remembered quite distinctly when the Germans came to Soissons for the first time, five and forty years before, and how they shot the townsmen in the public square. A few years ago the people of Soissons unveiled a monument to those murdered citizens. When this war is over they will have more names to add to those already carved on its base.

It is not a cheerful business strolling through a shell-shattered and deserted town. You feel depressed and speak in hushed tones, as though you were in a house that had been visited by death as, indeed, you are. In the Place de la Republique we found a score or so of infantrymen on duty, these being the only soldiers that we saw in the town. Along the main thoroughfares nearly every shop was closed and its windows shuttered. Some tobacconists and two or three cafés remained bravely open, but little business was being done. I do not think that I am exaggerating when I say that every fourth or fifth house we passed showed evidences of the German bombard-

ment. One shell, I remember, had exploded in the show-window of a furniture store and had demolished a gilt-and-red-plush parlour suite. The only thing unharmed was a sign which read "Cheap and a bargain."

In the very heart of Soissons stands the huge bulk of the magnificent twelfth-century cathedral, its massive tower rising skyward like a finger pointing toward heaven. There are few nobler piles in France. Repeated rappings at a door in the churchyard wall brought the *curé*, a white-haired, kindly faced giant of a man. Under his guidance we entered the cathedral, or rather what remains of it, for its famous Gothic windows are now but heaps of shattered glass, the splendid nave is open to the sky, half the roof has been torn away, the pulpit with its exquisite carvings has been splintered by a shell, and the massive columns have been chipped and scarred. Carvings which were the pride of master craftsmen long centuries dead have been damaged past repair. In the floor of the nave yawns a hole large enough to hold a horse. Around the statues which flank the altar, and which are too large to move, have been raised barricades of sand-

bags. And this, mind you, in the house of Him who was the Apostle of Peace !

While the *curé* was pointing out to us the ruined beauties of his celebrated windows, something passed overhead with a wail like a lost soul. A moment later came an explosion which made the walls of the cathedral tremble. "Ah," remarked the *curé* unconcernedly, "they've begun again. I thought it must be nearly time. They bombard the cathedral every evening between five and seven."

As he finished speaking, another shell came whining over the housetops and burst with a prodigious racket in the street outside.

"How far away was that one ?" I asked one of the officers.

"Only about a hundred metres," was the careless reply.

As unmoved as though at a church supper, the *curé* placidly continued his recital of the cathedral's departed glories, reeling off the names of the saints and martyrs who lie buried beneath the floor of its nave, his recital being punctuated at thirty-second intervals by explosions, each a little louder than the one preceding. Finally a shell came so low that I

thought it was going through the roof. It came so near, in fact, that I suggested it was getting on toward dinner time and that we really ought to be on our way. But the *curé* was not to be hurried. He had had no visitors for nearly a year and he was determined to make the most of us. He insisted on showing us that cathedral from sacristy to belfry, and if he thought that we were missing anything he carefully explained it all over again.

“Why do you stay on here, father?” I asked him. “A shell is likely to drop in on you at any moment.”

“That is as God wills, monsieur,” was the quiet answer. “A captain does not leave his ship in a storm. I have my people to look after, for they are as helpless as children and look to me for advice. And the wounded also. We have turned the sacristy, as you saw, into a dressing-station. Yes, there is much to do. If a shell comes it will find me at my post of duty doing what I may to serve God and France.”

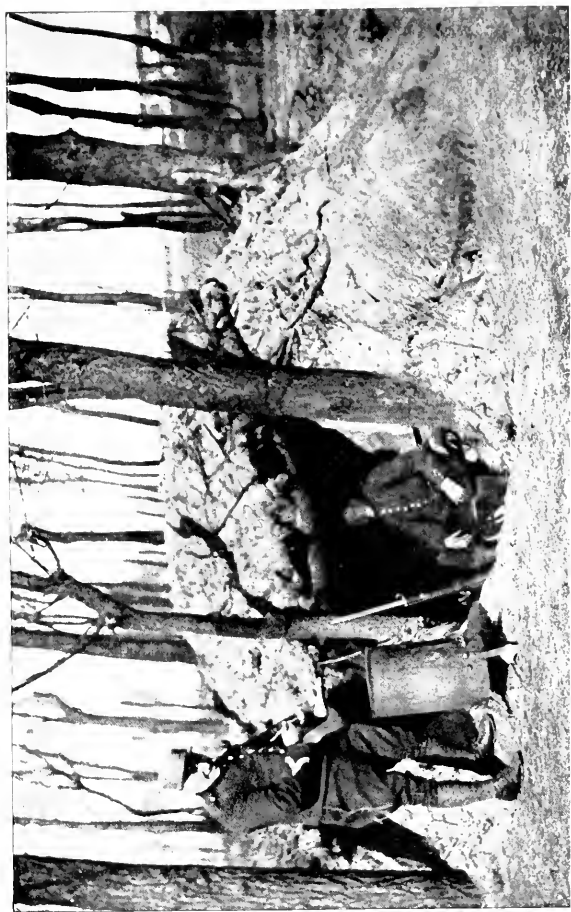
So we went away and left him standing there alone in the doorway of his shattered

cathedral, a picturesque and gallant figure, with his white hair coming down upon his shoulders and his tall figure wrapped in the black soutane. To such men as these the people of France owe a debt that they can never repay. Though they wear cassocks instead of cuirasses, though they carry Bibles instead of bayonets, they are none the less real soldiers—soldiers of the Lord.

It must be borne in mind that the task of the artillery is far easier in hilly or mountainous country, such as is found along the Aisne and in the Vosges and Alsace, where the movements of the enemy can be observed with comparative facility and where both observers and gunners can usually find a certain degree of shelter, than in Artois and Flanders, where the country is as flat as the top of a table, with nothing even remotely resembling a hill on which the observers can be stationed or behind which the guns can be concealed. In the flat country the guns, which in all cases are carefully masked by means of branches from detection by hostile aircraft, take position at distances varying from two thousand to five thousand yards from the

enemy's trenches. Immediately in the rear of each gun is a subterranean shelter, in which the gunners can take refuge in case a German battery locates them and attempts to shell them out. An artillery subaltern, known in the British service as the "forward observing officer," goes up to the infantry trenches and chooses a position, sometimes in a tree, sometimes in a shattered church-tower, sometimes in a sort of dug-out, from which he can obtain an unobstructed view of his battery's zone of fire. He is to his battery very much what a coach is to a football team, giving his men directions by telephone instead of through a megaphone, but, unlike the coach, he is stationed not on the side-line but on the firing-line. Laid on the surface of the ground, connecting him with the battery, is the field-telephone. As wires are easily cut by bursting shells, they are now being laid in a sort of ladder formation so that a dozen wires may be cut without interrupting communication. When the noise is so deafening that the voice of the observing officer cannot be heard on the field-telephone communication is carried on in the Morse code by means of a giant buzzer. Amid all the

uproar of battle the observing officer has to keep careful track, through his glasses, of every shell his battery fires, and to inform his battery commander by telephone of the effect of his fire. He must make no mistakes, for on those portions of the battle-line where the trenches are frequently less than a hundred yards apart the slightest miscalculation in giving the range might land the shells among his own men. The critical moment for the observing officer is, however, when the enemy makes a sudden rush and swarms of helmeted, grey-clad figures, climbing out of their trenches, come rolling forward in a steel-tipped wave, tripping in the barbed wire and falling in ones and twos and dozens. Instantly the French trenches crackle and roar into the full blast of magazine fire. The rattle of the machine guns sounds like a boy drawing a stick along the palings of a picket fence. The air quivers to the incessant crash of bursting shrapnel. "Infantry attack!" calls the observation officer into the telephone receiver which is clamped to his head. "Commence firing!" and his battery, two or three miles in the rear, begins pouring shrapnel on the



In the Argonne

"Cave-like shelters in which the men take refuge during the periodic shell-storms that visit them."



An observing officer directing the fire of a French battery three miles behind him
"Flattened to the ground with glasses at his eyes and a telephone at his lips he acts the part of prompter and tells the guns when to speak their parts"

advancing Germans. But still the grey figures come on, hoarsely cheering. "Drop twenty-five!" he orders. "Careful with your fuse-setting . . . very close to our trenches." The French shrapnel sprays the ground immediately in front of the French trenches as a street cleaner sprays the pavement with a hose. The grey line checks, falters, sways uncertainly before the blast of steel. Men begin to fall by dozens and scores, others turn and run for their lives. With a shrill cheer the French infantry spring from their trenches in a counter-attack. "Raise twenty-five! . . . raise fifty!" telephones the observing officer as the blue figures of his countrymen sweep forward in the charge. And so it goes, the guns backing up the French attacks and breaking the German ones, shelling a house or a haystack for snipers, putting a machine gun out of business, dropping death into the enemy's trenches or sending its steel calling-cards across to a German battery whose position has been discovered and reported by wireless by a scouting French aeroplane. And all the time the youngster out in front, flattened to the ground, with glasses at his eyes

and a telephone at his lips, acts the part of prompter and tells the guns when to speak their parts.

In reading accounts of artillery fire it should be remembered that there are two types of shell in common use to-day—shrapnel and high explosive—and that they are used for entirely different purposes and produce entirely different results. Shrapnel, which is intended only for use against infantry in the open, or when lightly entrenched, is a shell with a very thin steel body and a small bursting charge, generally of low-power explosive, in the base. By means of a time-fuse the projectile is made to burst at any given moment after leaving the gun, the explosion of the weak charge breaking the thin steel case and liberating the bullets, which fly forward with the velocity of the shrapnel, scattering much as do the pellets from a shot-gun. At a range of 3500 yards the bullets of a British 18-pound shrapnel, 375 in number, cover a space of 250 yards long and 30 yards wide—an area of more than one and a half acres. Though terribly effective against infantry attacks or unprotected batteries, shrapnel are wholly useless against

fortified positions, strongly built houses, or deep and well-planned entrenchments. The difference between shrapnel and high explosive is the difference between a shot-gun and an elephant rifle. The high-explosive shell, which is considerably stronger than the shrapnel, contains no bullets but a charge of high explosive—in the French service melinite, in the British usually lyddite, and in the German army trinitrotoluene. The effect of the high explosive is far more concentrated than that of shrapnel, covering only one-fifteenth of the area affected by the latter. Though shrapnel has practically no effect on barbed-wire entanglements or on concrete, and very little on earthworks, high-explosive shells of the same calibre destroy everything in the vicinity, concrete, wire entanglements, steel shields, guns, and even the trenches themselves disappearing like a dynamited stump before the terrific blast. The men holding the trenches are driven into their dug-outs, and may be reached even there by high-explosive shells fired from high-angle howitzers.

The commanding importance of the high-explosive shell in this war is due to the peculiar

nature of the conflict. Instead of fighting in the open field, the struggle has developed into what is, to all intents and purposes, a fortress warfare on the most gigantic scale. In this warfare all strategic manœuvres are absent, because manœuvres are impossible on ground where every square yard is marked and swept by artillery fire. The opposing armies are not simply entrenched. They have protected themselves with masses of concrete and steel armour, so that the so-called trenches are in reality concrete forts, shielded and casemated with armour plate, flanked with rapid-firers and mortars, linked to one another by marvellously concealed communicating trenches which are protected in turn by the fire of heavy batteries, guarded by the most ingenious entanglements, pitfalls and other obstructions that the mind of man has been able to devise, and defended by machine guns, in the enormous proportion of one to every fifty men, mounted behind steel plates and capable of firing six hundred shots a minute. In these subterranean works dwell the infantry, abundantly provided with hand grenades and appliances for throwing bombs and flaming

oil, their rifles trained, day and night, on the space over which an enemy must advance. That is the sort of wall which one side or the other will have to break through in order to win in this war. The only way to take such a position is by frontal attack, and the only way to make a frontal attack possible is by paving the way with such a torrent of high explosive that both entanglements and earthworks are literally torn to pieces and the infantry defending them demoralized or annihilated. No one before the war could have imagined the vast quantity of shells required for such an operation. In order to prepare the way for an infantry attack on a German position near Arras, the French fired two hundred thousand rounds of high explosive in a single day—and the scouts came back to report that not a barbed-wire entanglement, a trench, or a living human being remained. During the same battle the British, owing to a shortage of high-explosive ammunition, were able to precede their attack by only forty minutes of shell fire. This was wholly insufficient to clear away the entanglements and other obstructions, and, as a result, the men were

literally mowed down by the German machine guns. Even when the storming-parties succeed in reaching the first line of the enemy's trenches and bayonet or drive out the defenders, the opposing artillery, with a literal wall of fire, effectively prevents any reinforcements from advancing to their support. Shattered and exhausted though they are, the attackers must instantly set to work to fortify and consolidate the captured trenches, being subjected, meanwhile, to a much more accurate bombardment, as the enemy knows, of course, the exact range of his former positions and is able to drop his shells into them with unerring accuracy. It is obvious that such offensive movements cannot be multiplied or prolonged indefinitely, both on account of the severe mental and physical strain on the men and the appalling losses which they involve. Neither can such offensives be improvised. A commanding officer cannot smash home a frontal attack on an enemy's position at any moment that he deems auspicious any more than a surgeon can perform a major operation without first preparing his patient physically. Before launching an attack the ground must be

minutely studied ; the position to be attacked must be reconnoitred and photographed by aviators ; advanced trenches must be dug ; reserve troops must be moved forward and batteries brought into position without arousing the suspicions of the enemy ; and, most important of all, enormous quantities of projectiles and other material must be gathered in one place designated by the officer in charge of the operations. The greatest problem presented by an offensive movement is that of delivering to the artillery the vast supplies of shells necessary to pave the way for a successful attack. To give some idea of what this means, I might mention that the Germans, during the crossing of the San, *fired seven hundred thousand shells in four hours.*

There are no words between the covers of the dictionary which can convey any adequate idea of what one of these great artillery actions is like. One has to see—and hear—it. Buildings of brick and stone collapse as though they were built of cards. Whole towns are razed to the ground as a city of tents would be levelled by a cyclone. Trees are snapped off like carrots. Gaping holes as large as cottage cellars sud-

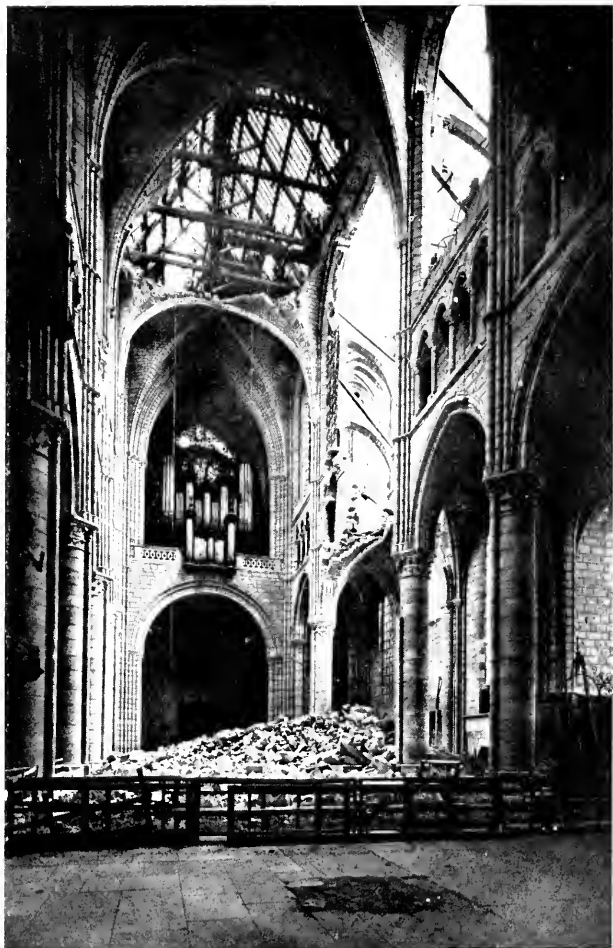
denly appear in the fields and in the stone-paved roads. Geysers of smoke and earth shoot high into the air. The fields are strewn with the shocking remains of what had once been men: bodies without heads or without legs; legs and arms and heads without bodies. Dead horses, broken waggons, bent and shattered equipment are everywhere. The noise is beyond all description—yes, beyond all conception. It is like a close-by clap of thunder which, instead of lasting for a fraction of a second, lasts for hours. There is no break, no pause in the hell of sound, not even a momentary diminution. The ground heaves and shudders beneath your feet. You find it difficult to breathe. Your head throbs until you think that it is about to burst. Your eyeballs ache and burn. Giant fingers seem to be steadily pressing your ear-drums inward. The very atmosphere palpitates to the tremendous detonations. The howl of the shell-storm passing overhead gives you the feeling that the skies are falling. Compared with it the roar of the cannon at Waterloo or even at Gettysburg must have sounded like the popping of fire-crackers.

Inconceivably awe-inspiring and terrifying



German dead lying in front of the French trenches
on the shores of the North Sea

"The extreme northern end of that system of trenches which stretches like
a monstrous snake from the North Sea to the Alps."



The Cathedral, Soissons

as is a modern artillery action, one eventually becomes accustomed to it, but I have yet to meet the person who could say with perfect truthfulness that he was indifferent to the fire of the great German siege cannon. I have three times been under the fire of the German siege-guns—during the bombardments of Antwerp, of Soissons, and of Dunkirk—and I hope with all my heart that I shall never have the experience again. Let me put it to you, my friends. How would *you* feel if you were sleeping quite peacefully in—let us say—the Hotel Metropole, and at six o'clock in the morning something dropped from the clouds, and in the pavement of Northumberland Avenue blew a hole large enough to bury a horse in? And what would be your sensations if, still bewildered by the suddenness of your awakening, you ran to the window to see what had happened, and something that sounded like an express-train came hurtling through the air from somewhere over in Lambeth, and with the crash of an exploding powder-mill transformed Whiteley's into a heap of pulverized stone and concrete? Well, that is precisely what happened to me one beautiful spring morning in Dunkirk.

To be quite frank, I didn't like Dunkirk from

the first. Its empty streets, the shuttered windows of its shops, and the inky blackness into which the city was plunged at night from fear of aeroplanes, combined to give me a feeling of uneasiness and depression. The place was about as cheerful as a country cemetery on a rainy evening. From the time I set foot in it I had the feeling that something was going to happen. I found that a room had been reserved for me on the upper floor of the local hostelry, known as the Hôtel des Arcades—presumably because there are none. I did not particularly relish the idea of sleeping on the upper floor, with nothing save the roof to ward off a bomb from a marauding aeroplane, for, ever since I was under the fire of Zeppelins in Antwerp, I have made it a point to put as many floors as possible between me and the sky.

It must have been about six o'clock in the morning when I was awakened by a splitting crash which made my bedroom windows rattle. A moment later came another and then another, each louder and therefore nearer than the one preceding. All down the corridor doors began to open, and I heard voices excitedly inquiring

what was happening. I didn't have to inquire. I knew from previous experience. A German Taube was raining death upon the city. Throwing open my shutters I could see the machine quite plainly, its armour-plated body gleaming in the morning sun like polished silver as it swept in ever-widening circles across the sky. Somewhere to the east a pom-pom began its infernal trip-hammerlike clatter. An armoured-car, evidently British from the "R.N." painted on its turret, tore into the square in front of the hotel, the lean barrel of its quick-firing gun sweeping the sky, and began to send shell after shell at the aerial intruder. From down near the water front came the raucous wail of a steam-siren warning the people to get under cover. A church bell began to clang hastily, insistently, imperatively. It seemed to say, "To your cellars! To your cellars! Hurry! . . . *Hurry!* . . . HURRY!" From the belfry of the church of St. Eloi a flag with blue and white stripes was run up as a warning to the townspeople that death was abroad. Suddenly, above the tumult of the bells and horns and hurrying footsteps, came a new and inconceivably terrifying

sound: a low, deep-toned roar rapidly rising into a thunderous crescendo like an express train approaching from far down the subway. As it passed above our heads it sounded as though a giant in the sky were tearing mighty strips of linen. Then an explosion which was brother to an earthquake. The housetops seemed to rock and sway. The hotel shook to its foundations. The pictures on the wall threatened to come down. The glass in the windows rattled until I thought that it would break. From beyond the housetops in the direction of the receiving hospital and the railway station a mushroom-shaped cloud of green-brown smoke shot suddenly high into the air. Out in the corridor a woman screamed hysterically: "My God! My God! They've begun again with the big cannon!" I heard the clatter of footsteps on the stairs as the guests rushed for the cellar. I began to dress. No fireman responding to a third alarm ever dressed quicker. Just as I was struggling with my boots there came another whistling roar and another terrific detonation. High in the air above the quivering city still circled the German aeroplane, informing by wireless the

German gunners, more than a score of miles away across the Belgian border, where their shells were hitting. Think of it ! *Think of bombarding a city at a range of twenty-three miles and every shot a hit !* That is the marvel of this modern warfare. Imagine the Great Western Station, the Albert Hall, the Crystal Palace and the London Hospital being blown to smithereens by shells fired from Windsor. And it was not a 42-centimetre siege-gun either, but a 15-inch naval gun which the Germans had brought from Kiel and mounted behind their lines in Flanders. Though French and British aviators made repeated flights over the German lines for the purpose of locating the gun and putting it out of business, their efforts met with no success, as the ingenious Teutons, it seems, had dug a sort of tunnel into which the gun was run back after each shot and there it stayed, in perfect security, until it was fired again. Is it any wonder that the Germans are so desperately anxious to reach Calais, with the fort-crowned cliffs of Dover rising across the channel less than twenty miles away ?

Descending to the cellars of the hotel, I

found that there was standing-room only. Guests, porters, cooks, waiters, chambermaids, English Red Cross nurses, and a French colonel wearing the Legion of Honour were shivering in the dampness amid the cobwebs and the wine-bottles. Every time a shell exploded the wine-bottles in their bins shook and quivered as though they, too, were alive and frightened. I lay no claim to bravery, but in other bombarded cities I have seen what happens to the people in the cellar when a shell strikes that particular building, and I had no desire to end my career like a rat in a trap. Should you ever, by any chance, find yourself in a city which is being bombarded, take my advice, I beg of you, and go out into the middle of the nearest open square and stay there until the bombardment is over. I believe that far more people are killed during bombardment by falling masonry and timbers than by the shells themselves. As I went upstairs I heard a Frenchwoman angrily demanding of the chambermaid why she had not brought her hot water. "But, madame," pleaded the terrified girl, "the city is being bombarded." "Is that any reason why I should not wash ?"

cried the irate lady. "Bring my hot water instantly."

At eight o'clock the officer commanding the garrison hurried in. He had invited me to lunch with him. "I am desolated that I cannot have the pleasure of your company at *déjeuner*, Monsieur Powell," said he, "but it is not wise for you to remain in the city. I am responsible to the Government for your safety, and it would make things easier for me if you would go. I have taken the liberty of sending for your car." You can call it cowardice or timidity or anything you please, but I am not at all ashamed to admit that I was never so glad to have an invitation cancelled. I have had a somewhat extensive acquaintance with bombardments, and I have always found that those who speak lightly of them are those who have never seen one.

In order to get out of range of the German shells my driver, acting under the orders of the commandant, turned the bonnet of the car toward Bergues, five miles to the southward. But we found that Bergues had not been overlooked by the German gunners, having, indeed, suffered more severely than

Dunkirk. When we arrived the bombardment was just over and the dust was still rising from the shattered houses. Twelve 38-centimetre shells had landed in the very heart of the little town, sending a score or more of its inhabitants, men, women, and children, to the hospital and a like number to the cemetery.

A few hours before Bergues had been as quaint and peaceful and contented a town of five thousand people as you could have found in France. Because of its quaint and simple charm touring motorists used to go out of their way to see it. It is fortified in theory but not in fact, for its moss-grown ramparts, which date from the Crusaders, have about as much military significance as the Tower of London. But the guide-books describe it as a fortified town, and that was all the excuse the Germans needed to turn loose upon it sudden death. To-day that little town is an empty, broken shell, its streets piled high with the brick and plaster of its ruined homes. One has to see the ruin produced by a 38-centimetre shell to believe it. If one hits a building that building simply ceases to exist. It



'The Mass before the battle

There are said to be upwards of twenty thousand priests fighting in the armies of France.



What a 38-centimetre shell, fired from a gun twenty-three miles away, did in Dunkirk

“When one of these shells hits a building, that building simply ceases to exist.”

crumbles, disintegrates, disappears. I do not mean to say that its roof is ripped off or that one of its walls is blown away. I mean to say that the whole building crashes to the ground as though flattened by the hand of God. The Germans sent only twelve of their shells into Bergues, but the central part of the town looked like Market Street in San Francisco after the earthquake. One of the shells struck a hospital and exploded in a ward filled with wounded soldiers. They are not wounded any longer. Another shell completely demolished a three-story brick house. In the cellar of that house a man, his wife, and their three children had taken refuge. There was no need to dig graves for them in the local cemetery. Throughout the bombardment a Taube hung over the doomed town to observe the effect of the shots, and to direct by wireless the distant gunners. I wonder what the German observer, peering down through his glasses upon the wrecked hospital and the shell-torn houses and the mangled bodies of the women and children, thought about it all. It would be interesting to know, wouldn't it ?

II. ON THE BRITISH BATTLE-LINE

A LONG a road in the outskirts of that French town which is the British Headquarters a youth was running. He was of considerably less than medium height, and fair-haired and very slender. One would have described him as a nice-looking boy. He wore a jersey and white running-shorts which left his knees bare, and he was bare-headed. Shoulders, back and chest well out, he jogged along at the steady dog-trot adopted by athletes and prize-fighters who are in training. Now, in ordinary times there is not anything particularly remarkable in seeing a scantily clad youth dog-trotting along a country road. You assume that he is training for a cross-country event, or for a seat in a 'varsity shell, or for the feather-weight championship, and you let it go at that. But these are not ordinary times in France, and ordinary young men in running-shorts are not permitted to trot along the roads as they list in

the immediate vicinity of British Headquarters. Even if you travel, as I did, in a large grey car, with an officer of the French General Staff for companion, you are halted every few minutes by a sentry who turns the business end of a rifle in your direction and demands to see your papers. But no one challenged the young man in the running-shorts or asked to see *his* papers. Instead, whenever a soldier caught sight of him that soldier clicked his heels together and stood rigidly at attention. After you had observed the curious effect which the appearance of this young man produced on the military of all ranks it suddenly struck you that his face was strangely familiar. Then you all at once remembered that you had seen it hundreds of times in the magazines and the illustrated papers. Under it was the caption, "His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales." That young man will some day, if he lives, sit in an ancient chair in Westminster Abbey, and the Archbishop of Canterbury will place a crown upon his head, and his picture will appear on coins and postage-stamps in use over half the globe.

Now, the future King of England—

Edward VIII they will doubtless call him—is not getting up at daybreak and reeling off half a dozen miles or so because he particularly enjoys it. He is doing it with an end in view. He is doing it for precisely the same reason that the prize-fighter does it—he is training for a battle. To me there was something wonderfully suggestive and characteristic in the sight of that young man plugging doggedly along the country road. He seemed to epitomize the spirit which I found to exist along the whole length of the British battle-line. Every British soldier in France has come to appreciate that he is engaged in a struggle without parallel in history—a struggle in which he is confronted by formidable, ferocious, resourceful, and utterly unscrupulous opponents, and from which he is by no means certain to emerge a victor—and he is, therefore, methodically and systematically preparing to win that struggle just as a pugilist prepares himself for a battle in a prize-ring.

The British soldier has at last come to a realization of the terrible gravity of the situation which faces him. You don't hear him singing "Tipperary" any more or boasting

about what he is going to do when he gets to Berlin. He has come to have a most profound respect for the fighting qualities of the men in the spiked helmets. He knows that he, an amateur boxer as it were, is up against the world's heavy-weight professional champion, and he perfectly appreciates that he has, to use his own expression, "a hell of a job" in front of him. He has already found out, to his cost and to his very great disgust, that his opponent has no intention of being hampered by the rules laid down by the late Marquis of Queensberry, having missed no opportunity to gouge or kick or hit below the belt. But the British soldier has now become familiar with his opponent's tactics, and one of these days, when he gets quite ready, he is going to give that opponent the surprise of his life by landing on him with both feet, spikes on his shoes, and brass knuckles on his fingers. Meanwhile like the young Prince in the running-shorts, he has buckled down with grim determination to the task of getting himself into condition.

I suppose that if I were really politic and far-sighted I would cuddle up to the War Office and make myself solid with the General

Staff by confidently asserting that the British Army is the most efficient killing-machine in existence, and that its complete and early triumph is as certain as that the sparks fly upward ; neither of which assertions would be true. It should be kept in mind, however, that the British did not begin the building of their war-machine until after the outbreak of hostilities, while the German organization is the result of upward of half a century of unceasing thought, experiment, and endeavour. But what the British have accomplished since the war began is one of the marvels of military history. Lord Kitchener came to a War Office which had long been in the hands of lawyers and politicians. Not only was he expected to remodel an institution which had become a national joke, but at the same time to raise a huge volunteer army. In order to raise this army he had to have recourse to American business methods. He employed a clever advertising specialist to cover the walls and newspapers of the United Kingdom with all manner of striking advertisements, some pleading, some bullying, some caustic in tone, by which he has proved that, given patriotic

impulse, advertising for people to go to war is just like advertising for people to buy automobiles or shaving soap or smoking tobacco. It was not soothing to British pride—but it got the men. Late in the spring of 1915, after half a year or more of training, during which they were worked as a negro teamster works a mule, those men were marched abroad transports and sent across the Channel. So admirably executed were the plans of the War Office and so complete the precautions taken by the Admiralty, that this great force was landed on the Continent without the loss of a single life from German mines or submarines. That, in itself, is one of the greatest accomplishments of the war. England now (November 1915) has in France an army of approximately a million men. But it is a new army. The bulk of it is without experience and without experienced regiments to stiffen it and give it confidence, for the army of British regulars which landed in France at the outbreak of the war has ceased to exist. The old regimental names remain, but the officers and men who composed those regiments are, to-day, in the hospitals or the cemeteries. The losses suffered by the British

Army in Flanders are appalling. The West Kent Regiment, for example, has been three times wiped out and three times reconstituted. Of the Black Watch, the Rifle Brigade, the Infantry of the Household, scarcely a vestige of the original establishments remains. Hardly less terrible are the losses which have been suffered by the Canadian Contingent. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry landed in France 1400 strong. To-day only 140 remain. The present colonel was a private in the ranks when the regiment sailed from Quebec.

The machine that the British have knocked together, though still a trifle wobbly and somewhat creaky in its joints, is, I am convinced, eventually going to succeed. But you cannot appreciate what it is like or what it is accomplishing by reading about it ; you have to see it for yourself as I did. That corner of France lying between the forty miles of British front and the sea is, to-day, I suppose, the busiest region in the world. It reminded me of the Panama Canal Zone during the rush period of the Canal's construction. It is as busy as the lot where the Greatest Show on Earth is getting

ready for the afternoon performance. Down the roads, far as the eye can see, stretch long lines of London motor-buses, sombre war-coats of elephant grey replacing the staring advertisements of teas, tobaccos, whiskeys, and theatrical attractions, crowded no longer with pale-faced clerks hurrying toward the City, but with sun-tanned men in khaki hurrying toward the trenches. Interminable processions of motor-lorries go lumbering past, piled high with the supplies required to feed and clothe the army, practically all of which are moved from the coast to the front by road, the railways being reserved for the transport of men and ammunition; and the ambulances, hundreds and hundreds of them, hurrying their blood-soaked cargoes to the hospitals so that they may go back to the front for more. So crowded are the highways behind the British front that at the cross-roads in the country and at the street crossings in the towns are posted military policemen as if they were Bobbies at the Bank or at Piccadilly Circus. The roads are never permitted to fall into disrepair, for on their condition depends the rapidity with which the army can be supplied

with food and ammunition. Hence road gangs and steam-rollers and sprinkling-carts are at work constantly. When the war is over, France will have better roads and more of them than she ever had before. There are speed-limit signs everywhere—heretofore practically unknown in France, where anyone who was careless enough to get run over was liable to arrest for obstructing the traffic. At frequent intervals along the roads are blacksmiths' shops and motor-car repair stations, to say nothing of the repair cars, veritable garages on wheels, which, when news of an accident or breakdown is received, go tearing toward the scene of trouble as a fire-engine responds to an alarm of fire. At night all cars must run without lights, as a result of which many *camions* and motor-buses have met with disaster by running off the roads in the darkness and tipping over in the deep ditches. To provide for this particular form of mishap the Army Service Corps has designed a most ingenious contrivance which yanks the huge machines out of the ditch and sets them on the road again as easily as though they were stubborn mules. Upon the door of every house



“Far as the eye can see stretch long lines of London motor-buses in war-coats of elephant-grey, crowded with sun-tanned men in khaki hurrying toward the trenches”



British field-kitchens on the march in Flanders

"Napoleon said, 'An army marches on its belly,' and the Army Service Corps is seeing to it that the belly of the British soldier is never empty."

we passed, whether château or cottage, was marked the number of men who could be billeted upon it. There are signs indicating where water can be obtained and fodder and pasturage and petrol. In every town and village are to be found military interpreters, known by a distinctive cap and brassard, who are always ready to straighten out a misunderstanding between a Highlander from the north of the Tweed and a tirailleur from Tunisia, who will assist a Ghurka from the Indian hill country in bargaining for poultry with a Flemish-speaking peasant, or instruct a lost Senegalese how to get back to his command. An officers' training-school has been established at St. Omer, which is the British Headquarters, where those men in the ranks who possess the necessary education are fitted to receive commissions. After this war is over the British Army will no longer be officered by the British aristocracy. The wholesale promotions of enlisted men made necessary by the appalling losses among the officers will result in completely changing the complexion of the British military establishment. Provided he has the necessary educational qualifications, the son of

a day labourer will hereafter stand as much chance as the son of a duke. Did you know, by the way, that the present Chief of the General Staff entered the army as a private in the ranks ?

The wonderful thoroughness of the British is exemplified by the bulletins which are issued every morning by the Intelligence Department for the information of the brigade and regimental commanders. They resemble ordinary handbills and contain a summary of all the information which the Intelligence Department has been able to collect during the preceding twenty-four hours as to what is going on behind the German lines—movements of troops, construction of new trenches, changes in the location of batteries, shortage of ammunition, condition of the roads ; everything, in short, which might be of any conceivable value to the British to know. For example, the report might contain a sentence something like this: “ At five o’clock to-morrow morning the Prussian Guard, which has been holding position No. —, to the south of Ypres, will be relieved by the 47th Bavarian Landsturm ”—which, by the way, would probably result in

the British attacking the position mentioned. The information contained in these bulletins comes from many sources—from spies in the pay of the Intelligence Department, from aviators who make reconnaissance flights over the German lines, and particularly from the inhabitants of the invaded regions, who, by various ingenious expedients, succeed in communicating to the Allies much important information—often at the cost of their lives.

The great base camps which the British have established at Calais and Havre and Boulogne and Rouen are marvels of organization, efficiency, and cleanliness. Cities whose macadamized streets are lined with portable houses of wood or metal which have been brought to the Continent in sections, and which have sewers and telephone systems and electric lights, and accommodation for a hundred thousand men apiece, have sprung up on the sand dunes of the French coast as though by the wave of a magician's wand. Here, where the fresh, healing wind blows in from the sea, have been established hospitals, each with a thousand beds. Huge warehouses have been built of concrete to hold the vast quantity of stores

which are being rushed across the Channel by an endless procession of transports and cargo steamers. So efficient is the British field-post system, which is operated by the Army Post Office Division of the Royal Engineers, that within forty-eight hours after a wife or mother or sweetheart drops a letter into a post-box in England that letter has been delivered in the trenches to the man to whom it was addressed.

In order to prevent military information leaking out through the letters which are written by the soldiers to the folks at home, one in every five is opened by the regimental censor, it being obviously out of the question to peruse them all. If, however, the writer is able to get hold of one of the precious green envelopes, whose colour is a guarantee of private and family matters only, he is reasonably certain that his letter will not be read by other eyes than those for which it is intended. Nor does the field-post confine itself to the transmission of letters, but transmits delicacies and comforts of every sort to the boys in the trenches, and the boys in the trenches use the same medium to send shell fragments, German

helmets, and other souvenirs to their friends at home. I know a lady who sent her son in Flanders a box of fresh asparagus from their Devonshire garden on a Friday, and he had it for his Sunday dinner. And this reminds me of an interesting little incident which is worth the telling and might as well be told here as elsewhere. A well-known American business man, the president of one of New York's street railway systems, has a son who is a second lieutenant in the Royal Artillery. The father was called back to America at a time when his son's battery was stationed in a particularly hot corner to the south of Ypres. The father was desperately anxious to see his son before he sailed, but he knew that the chances of his being permitted to do so were almost infinitesimal. Nevertheless, he wrote a note to Lord Kitchener explaining the circumstances and adding that he realized that it was probably quite impossible to grant such a request. He left the note himself at York House. Before he had been back in his hotel an hour he was called to the telephone. "This is the secretary of Lord Kitchener speaking," said the voice. "He desires me to say that

you shall certainly see your son before returning to America, and that you are to hold yourself in readiness to go to the Continent at a moment's notice." A few days later he received another message from the War Office: "Take to-morrow morning's boat from Folkestone to Boulogne. Your son will be waiting for you on the quay." The long arm of the great War Minister had reached out across the English Channel and had picked that obscure second lieutenant out from that little Flemish village, and had brought him by motor-car to the coast, with a twenty-four hours leave of absence in his pocket, that he might say good-bye to his father.

The maxim that "an army marches on its belly" is as true to-day as when Napoleon uttered it, and the Army Service Corps is seeing to it that the belly of the British soldier is never empty. Of all the fighting men in the field, the British soldier is far and away the best fed. He is, indeed, almost over-fed, particularly as regards jams, marmalades, puddings, and other articles containing large quantities of sugar, which, so the army surgeons assert, is the greatest restorer of the muscular

tissues. Though the sale of spirits is strictly prohibited in the military zone, a ration of rum is served out at daybreak each morning to the men in the trenches.

To Miss Jane Addams has been attributed the following assertion : " We heard in all countries similar statements in regard to the necessity for the use of stimulants before men would engage in bayonet charges, that they have a regular formula in Germany, that they give them rum in England and absinthe in France ; that they all have to give them the ' dope ' before the bayonet charge is possible." Now, Miss Addams, or whoever is responsible for this statement, has never, so far as I am aware, been in the trenches. Of the conditions which exist there she knows only by hearsay. Miss Addams says that rum is given to the British soldier. That is perfectly true. In pursuance of orders issued by the Army Medical Corps, every man who has spent the night in the trenches is given a ration (about a gill) of rum at daybreak, not to render him reckless, as Miss Addams would have us believe, but to counteract the effects of the mud and water in which he has been standing for many hours.

But when the author of the paragraph asserts that the French soldiers are given absinthe she or he makes an assertion that is without foundation of fact. Not only have I never seen a glass of absinthe served in France since the law was passed which made its sale illegal, but I have never seen spirits of any kind in use in the zone of operations. More than once, coming back, chilled and weary, from the trenches, I have attempted to obtain either whiskey or brandy only to be told that its sale is rigidly prohibited in the zone of the armies. The regular ration of the French soldier includes now, just as in time of peace, a pint of *vin ordinaire*—the cheap wine of the country—this being, I might add, considerably less than the man would drink with his meals were he in civil life. As regards the conditions which exist in the German armies I cannot speak with the same assurance, because I have not been with them since the autumn of 1914. During the march across Belgium there was, I am perfectly willing to admit, considerable drunkenness among the German soldiers, but this was due to the men looting the wine-cellars in the towns through

which they passed and not, as we are asked to believe, to their officers having systematically "doped" them. I have heard it stated, on various occasions, that German troops are given a mixture of rum and ether before going into action. Whether this is true I cannot say. Personally, I doubt it. If a man's life ever depends upon a clear brain and a cool head it is when he is going into battle. Everything considered, therefore, I am convinced that intemperance virtually does not exist among the armies in the field. I feel that this accusation does grave injustice to brave and sober men and that its author owes them an apology.

The British troops are not permitted to drink unboiled or unfiltered water, each regiment having two steel water-carts fitted with Birkenfeldt filters from which the men fill their water-bottles. As a result of this precaution, dysentery and diarrhœa, the curse of armies in previous wars, have practically disappeared, while, thanks to compulsory inoculation, typhoid is unknown. Perhaps the most important of all the sanitary devices which have been brought into existence by this war, and without which

it would not be possible for the men to remain in the trenches at all, is the great force-pump that is operated at night and which throws lime and carbolic acid on the unburied dead. It is, indeed, impossible to overpraise the work being done by the Royal Army Medical Corps, which has, among its many other activities, so improved and speeded up the system of getting the wounded from the firing-line to the hospitals that, as one Tommy remarked, "You 'ears a 'ell of a noise, and then the nurse says : ' Sit hup and tike this broth.' "

Though in this war the work of the cavalry is almost negligible ; though cartridges and marmalade are hurried to the front on motor-trucks and the wounded are hurried from the front back to the hospital in motor-ambulances ; though dispatch riders bestride panting motor-cycles instead of panting steeds ; though scouting is done by airmen instead of horse-men, the day of the horse in warfare has by no means passed. Without the horse, indeed, the guns could not go into action, for no form of tractor has yet been devised for hauling batteries over broken country. In fact, all of

the belligerent nations are experiencing great difficulty in providing a sufficient supply of horses, for the average life of a war-horse is very short; ten days assert some authorities, sixteen say others. For the first time in the history of warfare, therefore, the horse is treated as a creature which must be cared for when sick or wounded as well as when in health, and this not merely from motives of sentiment or humanity but as a detail of military efficiency. "For want of a nail," runs the old ditty, "the shoe was lost; for want of a shoe the horse was lost; for want of a horse the rider was lost; for want of a rider the battle was lost"—and the Royal Army Veterinary Corps is seeing to it that no battles are lost for lack of either horses or horseshoes. The Army Veterinary Corps now has on the British sector 700 officers and 8000 men, whose business it is to conserve the lives of the horses. The last report that I have seen places the total number of horses treated in the various hospital units (each of which accommodates 1000 animals) as approximately 81,000, of which some 47,000 had been returned to the Remount Department as again fit for active service;

30,000 were still under treatment ; the balance having died, been destroyed, or sold.

The horses in use by the British Army in France are the very pick of England, the Colonies, and foreign countries ; thoroughbred and three-quarter bred hunters from the hunting counties and from Ireland ; hackneys, draught and farm animals ; Walers from Australia ; wire-jumpers from New Zealand ; hardy stock from Alberta and Saskatchewan ; sturdy ponies from the hill country of India ; thousands upon thousands of animals from the American South-West, and from the Argentine ; to say nothing of the great sixteen-hand mules from Missouri and Spain.

Animals suffering from wounds or sickness are shipped back to the hospital bases on the coast in herds, each being provided with a separate covered stall, or, in case of pneumonia, with a box-stall. The spotless buildings, with their exercise tracks and acres of green paddocks, suggest a racecourse rather than a hospital for horses injured in war. Each hospital has its operating-sheds, its X-ray department, its wards for special ailments, its laboratories for preventive research work, a pharmacy, a

museum which affords opportunity for the study of the effects of sabre, shell, and bullet wounds, and a staff of three hundred trained veterinarians. Schools have also been established in connexion with the hospitals in which the grooms and attendants are taught the elements of anatomy, dentistry, farriery, stabling, feeding, sanitation, and, most important of all, the care of hoofs. All the methods and equipment employed are the best that science can suggest and money can obtain, everything having passed the inspection of the Duke of Portland and the Earl of Lonsdale, the two greatest horse-breeders in England. Attached to each division of troops in the field is a mobile veterinary section, consisting of an officer and twenty-two men, who are equipped to render first-aid service to wounded horses and whose duty it is to decide which animals shall be sent to the hospitals for treatment, which are fit to return to the front for further service, and which cases are hopeless and must be destroyed. The enormous economic value of this system is conclusively proved by the fact that it has reduced sickness among horses in the British Army 50 per cent., and mortality 47 per cent.

The question that has been asked me more frequently than any other is why the British, with upwards of a million men in the field, are holding only fifty miles of battle-front, as compared with seventeen miles held by the Belgians and nearly four hundred by the French. There are several reasons for this. It should be remembered, in the first place, that the British Army is composed of green troops, while the French ranks, thanks to the universal service law, are filled with men all of whom have spent at least three years with the colours. In the second place, the British sector is by far the most difficult portion of the Western battle-front to hold, not only because of the configuration of the country, which offers little natural protection, but because it lies squarely athwart the road to the Channel ports—and it is to the Channel ports that the Germans are going if men and shells can get them there. The fighting along the British sector is, moreover, of a more desperate and relentless nature than elsewhere on the Allied line, because the Germans nourish a deeper hatred for the English than for all their other enemies put together.

It was against the British, remember, that the Germans first used their poison-gas. The first engagement of importance in which gas played a part was the second battle of Ypres, lasting from April 22 until May 13, which will probably take rank in history as one of the greatest battles of all time. In it the Germans, owing to the surprise and confusion created by their introduction of poison-gas, came within a hair's breadth of breaking through the Allied line, and would certainly have done so had it not been for the gallantry and self-sacrifice of the Canadian Division, which, at the cost of appalling losses, won imperishable fame. The German bombardment of Ypres began on April 20 and in forty-eight hours, so terrible was the rain of heavy projectiles which poured down upon it, the quaint old city, with its exquisite Cloth Hall, was but a heap of blackened, smoking ruins. That portion of the Allied line to the north of the city was held, along a front of some four miles, by a French division composed of Colonials, Algerians, and Senegalese, stiffened by several line regiments. Late in the afternoon of the 22nd, peering above their trenches, they saw,

rolling toward them across the Flemish plain, an impalpable cloud of yellowish-green, which, fanned by a brisk wind, moved forward at the speed of a trotting horse. It came on with the remorselessness of Fate. It blotted out what was happening behind it as the smoke screen from a destroyer masks the manœuvres of a Dreadnought. The spring vegetation shrivelled up before it as papers shrivel when thrown into a fire. It blasted everything it touched as with a hand of death. No one knew what it was or whence it came. Nearer it surged and nearer. It was within a hundred metres of the French position . . . fifty . . . thirty . . . ten . . . and then the silent horror was upon them. Men began to cough and hack and strangle. Their eyes smarted and burned with the pungent, acrid fumes. Soldiers staggered and fell before it in twos and fours and dozens as miners succumb to fire-damp. Men, strained and twisted into grotesque, horrid attitudes, were sobbing their lives out on the floors of the trenches. The fire of rifles and machine guns weakened, died down, ceased. The whole line swayed, wavered, trembled on the verge of panic. Just then a

giant Algerian shouted, "The Boches have turned loose evil spirits upon us ! We can fight men, but we cannot fight *afrits* ! Run, brothers ! Run for your lives ! " That was all that was needed to precipitate the disaster. The superstitious Africans, men from the West Coast where voodooism still holds sway, men of the desert steeped in the traditions and mysteries of Islam, broke and ran. The French white troops, carried off their feet by the sudden rush, were swept along in the mad debacle. And as they ran the yellow cloud pursued them remorselessly, like a great hand reaching out for their throats.

An eye-witness of the rout that followed told me that he never expects to see its like this side of the gates of hell. The fields were dotted with blue-clad figures wearing kepis, and brown-clad ones wearing turbans and tarbooshes, who stumbled and fell and rose again and staggered along a few paces and fell to rise no more. The highways leading from the trenches were choked with maddened, fear-crazed white and black and brown men who had thrown away their rifles, their cartridge pouches, their knapsacks, in some cases

even their coats and shirts. Some were calling on Christ and some on Allah and some on their strange pagan gods. Their eyes were starting from their sockets, on their foreheads stood glistening beads of sweat, they slavered at the mouth like dogs, their cheeks and breasts were flecked with foam. "We're not afraid of the Boches !" screamed a giant sergeant of Zouaves on whose breast were the ribbons of a dozen wars. "We can fight *them* until hell turns cold. But this we cannot fight. *Le Bon Dieu* does not expect us to stay and die like rats in a sewer." Guns and gun-caissons passed at a gallop, Turcos and tirailleurs clinging to them, the fear-crazed gunners flogging their reeking horses frantically. The ditches bordering the roads were filled with overturned waggons and abandoned equipment. Giant negroes, naked to the waist, tore by shrieking that the spirits had been loosed upon them and slashing with their bayonets at all who got in their path. Mounted officers, frantic with anger and mortification, using their swords and pistols indiscriminately, vainly tried to check the human stream. And through the four-mile breach which the poison-gas had made the Germans

were pouring in their thousands. The roar of their artillery sounded like unceasing thunder. The scarlet rays of the setting sun lighted up such a scene as Flanders had never before beheld in all its bloody history. Then darkness came and the sky was streaked across with the fiery trails of rockets and the sudden splotches of bursting shrapnel. The tumult was beyond all imagination—the crackle of musketry, the rattle of machine guns, the crash of high explosive, the thunder of falling walls, the clank of harness and the rumble of wheels, the screams of the wounded and the groans of the dying, the harsh commands of the officers, the murmur of many voices, and the shuffle, shuffle, shuffle of countless hurrying feet.

And through the breach still poured the helmeted legions like water bursting through a broken dam. Into that breach were thrown the Canadians. The story of how, overwhelmed by superior numbers of both men and guns, choked by poison-fumes, reeling from exhaustion, sometimes without food, for it was impossible to get it to them, under such a rain of shells as the world had never before seen,

the brawny men from the oversea Dominion fought on for a solid week, and thereby saved the army from annihilation, needs no re-telling here. Brigade after brigade of fresh troops, division after division, was hurled against them but still they battled on. So closely were they pressed at times that they fought in little groups ; men from Ontario and Quebec shoulder to shoulder with blood-stained heroes from Alberta and Saskatchewan. At last, when it seemed as though human endurance could stand the strain no longer, up went the cry, " Here come the guns ! " and the Canadian batteries, splashed with sweat and mud, tore into action on the run. " Action front ! " screamed the officers, and the guns whirled like polo ponies so that their muzzles faced the oncoming wave of grey. " With shrapnel ! . . . Load ! " The lean and polished projectiles slipped in and the breech-blocks snapped home. " Fire at will ! " and the blast of steel tore bloody avenues in the German ranks. But fresh battalions filled the gaps — the German reserves seemed inexhaustible—and they still came on. At one period of the battle the Germans were so



Machine-gun squad wearing masks as a protection against the asphyxiating gas with which the Germans precede their attacks



A British battery in action

"The gunners, streaming with sweat and grimed with powder, worked like the stokers on a record-breaking ocean liner."

close to the guns that the order was given, "Set your fuses at zero!" which means that a shell bursts almost the moment it leaves the muzzle of the gun. It was not until early on Friday morning that reinforcements reached the shattered Canadians and enabled them to hold their ground. Later the Northumbrian Division—Territorials arrived only three days before from the English training-camps—were sent to aid them and proved themselves as good soldiers as the veterans beside whom they fought. For days the fate of the army hung in the balance, for there seemed no end to the German reserves, who were wiped out by whole divisions only to be replaced by more, but against the stone wall of the Canadian resistance the men in the spiked helmets threw themselves in vain. On May 13, 1915, after three weeks of continuous fighting, ended the Second Battle of Ypres, not in a terrific and decisive climax, but slowly, sullenly, like two prize-fighters who have fought to the very limit of their strength.

According to the present British system, the soldiers spend three weeks at the front and one week in the rear—if possible, out of sound of the

guns. The entire three weeks at the front is, to all intents and purposes, spent in the trenches, though every third day the men are given a breathing spell. *Three weeks in the trenches!* I wonder if you of the sheltered life have any but the haziest notion of what that means. I wonder if *you*, Mr. Lawyer ; *you*, Mr. Doctor ; *you*, Mr. Business Man, can conceive of spending your summer vacation in a ditch 4 feet wide and 8 feet deep, sometimes with mud and water to your knees, sometimes faint from heat and lack of air, in your nostrils the stench of bodies long months dead, rotting amid the wire entanglements a few yards in front of you, and over your head steel death whining angrily, ceaselessly. I wonder if you can imagine what it must be like to sleep—when the roar of the guns dies down sufficiently to make sleep possible—on foul straw in a hole hollowed in the earth, into which you have to crawl on all fours, like an animal into its lair. I wonder if you can picture yourself as wearing a uniform so stiff with sweat and dirt that it would stand alone, and underclothes so rotten with filth that they would fall apart were you to take them off, your body so crawling with



“ Bodies, long months dead, rotting amid the wire entanglements ”



“ Imagine what it must be like to sleep in a hole in the earth, into which you have to crawl on all fours, like an animal into its lair ”



French high-explosive shells bursting on the German trenches

vermin and so long unwashed that you are an offence to all whom you approach—yet with no chance to bathe or to change your clothes or sometimes even to wash your hands and face for weeks on end. I wonder how your nerves would stand the strain if you knew that at any moment a favourable wind might bring a gas cloud rolling down upon you to kill you by slow strangulation, or that a shell might drop into the trench in which you were standing in water to your knees and leave you floating about in a bloody mess which turned that water red, or that a Taube might let loose upon you a shower of steel arrows which would pass through you as a needle passes through a piece of cloth, or that a mine might be exploded beneath your feet and distribute you over the landscape in fragments too small to be worth burying, or, worse still, to leave you alive amid a litter of heads and arms and legs which a moment before had belonged to your comrades, the horror of it all turning you into a maniac who alternately shrieks and gibbers and rocks with insane mirth at the horror of it all. I am perfectly aware that this makes anything but pleasant reading, my friends, but if men of

gentle birth, men with university educations, men who are accustomed to the same refinements and luxuries that you are, can endure these things, why, it seems to me that you ought to be able to endure reading about them.

The effect of some of the newer types of high-explosive shells is almost beyond belief. For sheer horror and destruction those from the Austrian-made Skoda howitzer, known as "Pilseners," make the famous 42-centimetre shells seem almost kind. The Skoda shells weigh 2800 lb., and their usual curve is $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles high. In soft ground they penetrate 20 feet before exploding. The explosion, which occurs two seconds after impact, kills every living thing within 150 yards, while scores of men who escape the flying metal are killed, lacerated, or blinded by the mere pressure of the gas. This gas pressure is so terrific that it breaks in the roofs and partitions of bombproof shelters. Of men close by not a fragment remains. The gas gets into the body cavities and expands, literally tearing them to pieces. Occasionally the clothes are stripped off leaving only the boots. Rifle-barrels near by are melted as

though struck by lightning. These mammoth shells travel comparatively slowly, however, usually giving enough warning of their approach so that the men have time to dodge them. Their progress is so slow, indeed, that sometimes they can be seen. Far more terrifying is the smaller shell which, because of its shrill, plaintive whine, has been nicknamed "Weary Willie," or those from the new "noiseless" field-gun recently introduced by the Germans, which gives no intimation of its approach until it explodes with a shattering crash above the trenches. Is it any wonder that hundreds of officers and men are going insane from the strain that they are under, and that hundreds more are in the hospitals suffering from neuritis and nervous breakdown? Is it any wonder that, when their term in the trenches is over, they have to be taken out of sight and sound of battle and their shattered nerves restored by means of a carefully planned routine of sports and games, as though they were children in a kindergarten?

The breweries, mills, and factories immediately behind the British lines have, wherever practicable, been converted into bath-houses

to which the men are marched as soon as they leave the trenches. The soldiers strip and, retaining nothing but their boots, which they deposit beside the bath-tub, they go in, soap in one hand and scrubbing-brush in the other, the hot bath being followed by a cold shower. The underclothes which they have taken off are promptly burned and fresh sets given to them, as are also clean uniforms, the discarded ones, after passing through a fumigating machine, being washed, pressed, and repaired by the numerous Frenchwomen who are employed for the purpose, so as to be ready for their owners the next time they return from the trenches. At one of these improvised bath-houses thirteen hundred men pass through each day.

“What do the French think of the English ? ”

To every one I put that question. Summing up all opinions, I should say that the French thoroughly appreciate the value of Britain's sea-power and what it has meant to them for her to have control of the seas, but they regard her lack of military preparedness and the deficiency of technique among the British officers

as inexcusable ; they consider the deep-seated opposition to conscription in England as incomprehensible ; they view the bickerings between British capital and labour as little short of criminal ; they regard the British officers who needlessly expose themselves as being not heroic but insane. The attitude of the British Press was, in the earlier days of the war at least, calculated to put a slight strain on the entente cordiale. Anxious, naturally enough, to throw into high relief the exploits of the British troops in France, the British newspapers vastly exaggerated the importance of the British expedition, thus throwing the whole picture of the war out of perspective. The behaviour of the British officers, moreover, though punctiliously correct, was not such as to mend matters, for they assumed an attitude of haughty condescension which, as I happen to know, was extremely galling to their French colleagues, most of whom had forgotten more about the science of war than the patronizing youngsters who officered the new armies had ever known. "To listen to you English and to read your newspapers," I heard a Frenchman say to an Englishman in the Travellers'

Club in Paris not long ago, "one would think that there was no one in France except the British Army and a few Germans."

I have never heard anyone in France suggest that the British officer is lacking in bravery, but I have often heard it intimated that he is lacking in brains. The view is held that he regards the war as a sporting affair, much as he would regard polo or a big-game hunting, rather than as a deadly serious business. When the British officers in Flanders brought over several packs of hounds and thus attempted to combine war and hunting, it created a more unfavourable impression among the French than if the British had lost a battle. "The British Army," a distinguished Italian general remarked to me shortly before Italy joined the Allies, "is composed of magnificent material ; it is well fed and admirably equipped—but the men look on war as sport and go into battle as they would into a game of football." To the Frenchman, whose soil is under the heel of the invader, whose women have been violated by a ruthless and brutal soldiery, whose historic monuments have been destroyed, and whose towns have been sacked and burned,

this attitude of mind is absolutely incomprehensible, and in his heart he resents it. The above, mind you, is written in no spirit of criticism; I am merely attempting to show you the Englishman through French eyes.

I have heard it said, in criticism, that the new British Army is composed of youngsters. So it is, but for the life of me I fail to see why this should be any objection. The ranks of both armies during our Civil War were filled with boys still in their teens. It was one of Wellington's generals, if I remember rightly, who used to say that, for really desperate work, he would always take lads in preference to seasoned veterans because the latter were apt to be "too cunning." "These children," exclaimed Marshal Ney, reviewing the beardless conscripts of 1813, "are wonderful! I can do anything with them; they will go anywhere!"

But the thing that really counts, when all is said and done, is the *spirit* of the men. The British soldier of this new army has none of the rollicking, devil-may-care recklessness of the traditional Tommy Atkins. He has not joined

the army from any spirit of adventure or because he wanted to see the world. He is not an adventurer ; he is a crusader. With him it is a deadly serious business. He has not enlisted because he wanted to, or because he had to, but because he felt he ought to. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred he has left a family, a comfortable home, and a good job behind him. And, unlike the stay-at-homes in England, he doesn't make the mistake of under-rating his enemy. He knows that the headlines which appear regularly in the English papers exultantly announcing " another British advance " are generally buncombe. He knows that it isn't a question of advancing but of hanging on. He knows that he will have to fight with every ounce of fight there is in him if he is to remain where he is now. He knows that before the Germans can be driven out of France and Belgium, much less across the Rhine, all England will be wearing crape. He knows that there is no truth in the reports that the enemy is weakening. He knows it because hasn't he vainly thrown himself in successive waves against that unyielding wall of steel ? He knows that it is going to be a long war—

probably a very long war indeed. Every British officer or soldier with whom I have talked has said that he expects that the spring of 1916 will find them in virtually the same positions that they have occupied for the past year. They will gain ground in some places, of course, and lose ground in others, but the winter, so the men in the trenches believe, will see no radical alteration in the present Western battle-line. All this, of course, will not make pleasant reading in England, where the Government and certain sections of the Press have given the people the impression that Germany is already beaten to her knees and that it is all over bar the shouting. Out along the battle-front, however, in the trenches, and around the camp-fires, you do not hear the men discussing "the terms of peace we will grant Germany," or "What shall we do with the Kaiser?" They are not talking much, they are not singing much, they are not boasting at all, but they have settled down to the herculean task that lies before them with a grim determination, a bull-dog tenacity of purpose, which is eventually, I believe, going to prove the deciding factor in the war. Nothing better

illustrates this spirit than the inscription which I saw on a cross over a newly made grave in Flanders :

TELL ENGLAND, YE THAT PASS THIS MONUMENT,
THAT WE WHO REST HERE DIED CONTENT.

III. CAMPAIGNING IN THE VOSGES

THE sergeant in charge of the machine gun, taking advantage of a lull in the rifle-fire which had crackled and roared along the trenches since dawn, was sprawled on his back in the gun-pit, reading a magazine. What attracted my attention was its being an American magazine.

“Where did you learn to read English ?” I asked him curiously.

“In America,” said he.

“What part ?” said I.

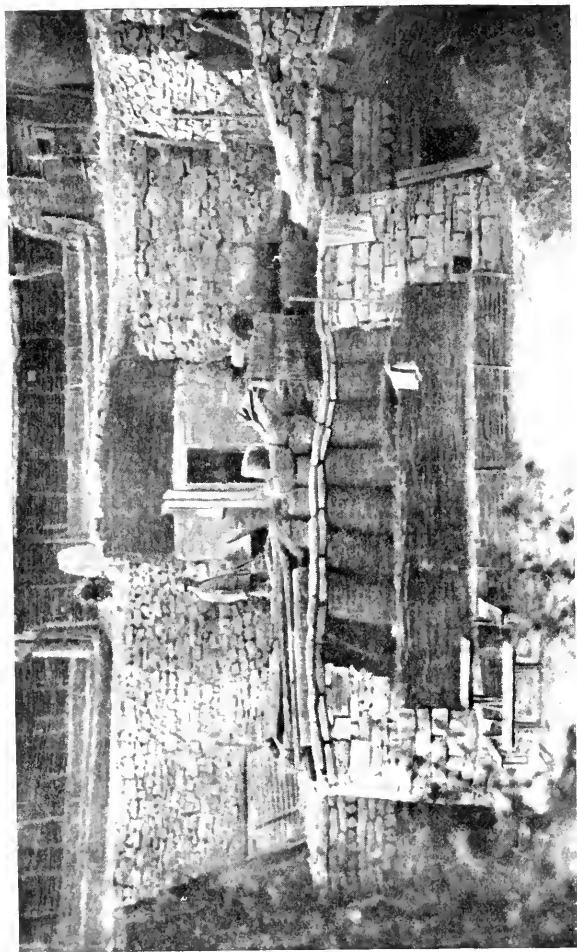
“Schenectady,” he answered. “Was with the General Electric until the war began.”

“I’m from up-State myself,” I remarked. “My people live in Syracuse.”

“The hell you say !” he exclaimed, scrambling to his feet and grasping my hand cordially. “I took you for an Englishman. From Syracuse, eh ? Why, that makes us sort of neighbours, doesn’t it ? We ought to have a drink on it. I suppose the Boches have plenty



A remarkable photo of a shrapnel shell.
French trenches



French trenches on the Somme

This is the sort of wall which one side or the other will have to break through in order to win this war.

they kicked up countless spurts of yellow earth. The sergeant stood up, grinning, and with a grimy handkerchief wiped from his face the powder stains and perspiration.

"If you should happen to be in Schenectady you might drop in at the General Electric plant and tell the boys—" he began, but the sentence was never finished, for just then a shell whined low above our heads and burst somewhere behind the trenches with the roar of an exploding powder-mill. We had disturbed the Germans' afternoon siesta, and their batteries were showing their resentment.

"I think that perhaps I'd better be moving along," said I hastily. "It's getting on toward dinner-time."

"Well, s'long," said he regretfully. "And say," he called after me, "when you get back to little old New York would you mind dropping into the Knickerbocker and having a drink for me? And be sure and give my regards to Broadway."

"I certainly will," said I.

And that is how a Franco-American whose name I do not know, sergeant in a French line regiment whose number I may not mention,

and I held an Old Home Week celebration of our own in the French trenches in Alsace. For all I know there may have been some other residents of central New York over in the German trenches. If so, they made no attempt to join out little reunion. Had they done so they would have received a *very* warm reception.

There were several reasons why I welcomed the opportunity offered me by the French General Staff to see the fighting in Alsace. In the first place a veil of secrecy had been thrown over the operations in that region, and the mysterious is always alluring. Secondly, most of the fighting that I have seen has been either in flat or only moderately hilly countries, and I was curious to see how warfare is conducted in a region as mountainous and as heavily forested as the Adirondacks or Oregon. Again, the Alsace sector is at the extreme southern end of that great battle-line, more than four hundred miles long, which stretches its unlovely length across Europe from the North Sea to the Alps, like some monstrous and deadly snake. And lastly, I wanted to see the retaking of

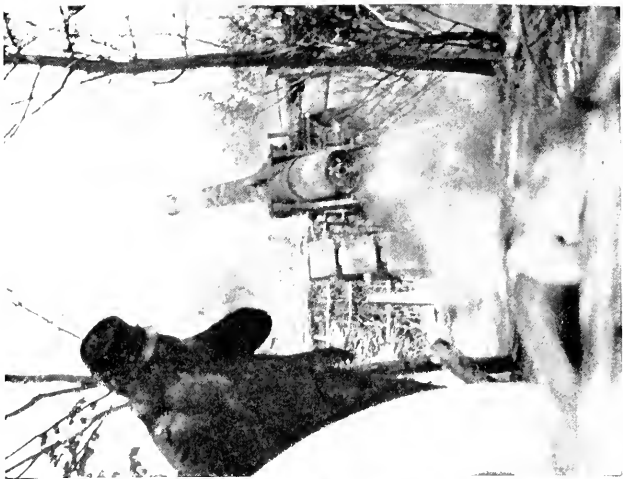


In the French trenches on the Yser

To put one's head a fraction of an inch above the parapet is to become a corpse,
so a watch is kept on the enemy through periscopes



In the Vosges the French have built veritable underground cities



A 155-millimetre gun firing at a German position eight miles away

Campaigning in the Vosges

that narrow strip of territory lying between the summit of the Vosges and the Rhine which for more than forty years has been mourned by France as one of her "lost provinces."

This land of Alsace is, in many respects the most beautiful that I have ever seen. Strung along the horizon, like sentinels wrapped in mantles of green, the peaks of the Vosges loom against the sky. On the slopes of the ridges, massed in their black battalions, stand forests of spruce and pine. Through peaceful valleys silver streams meander leisurely, and in the meadows which border them cattle stand knee-deep amid the lush green grass. The villages, their tortuous, cobble-paved streets lined on either side by dim arcades, and the old, old houses, with their turrets and balconies and steep-pitched pottery roofs, give you the feeling that they are not real, but that they are scenery on a stage, and this illusion is heightened by the men in their jaunty *bérets* and wooden sabots, and the women, whose huge black silk head-dresses accentuate the freshness of their complexions. It is at once a region of ruggedness and majesty and grandeur, of

quaintness and simplicity and charm. As I motored through it, it was hard to make myself believe that death was abroad in so fair a land, and that over there, on the other side of those near-by hills, men were engaged in the business of wholesale slaughter. I was brought to an abrupt realization of it, however, as we were passing through the old grey town of Gérardner. I heard a sudden outcry, and the streets, which a moment before had been a-bustle with the usual market-day crowd, were all at once deserted. The people dived into their houses as a woodchuck dives into its hole. The sentries on duty in front of the *État-Major* were staring upward. High in the sky, approaching with the speed of an express train, was what looked like a great white seagull, but which, from the silver sheen of its armour-plated body, I knew to be a German Taube. "We're in for another bombardment," remarked an officer. "The German airmen have been visiting us every day of late." As the aircraft swooped lower and nearer, a field-gun concealed on the wooded hillside above the town spoke sharply, and a moment later there appeared just below the Taube a sudden splotch

of white, like one of those powder-puffs that women carry. From the opposite side of the town another anti-aircraft gun began to bark defiance, until soon the aerial intruder was ringed about by wisps of fleecy smoke. At one time I counted as many as forty of them, looking like white tufts on a coverlet of turquoise blue. Things were getting too hot for the German, and with a beautiful sweep he swung about, and went sailing down the wind, content to wait until a more favourable opportunity should offer.

The inhabitants of these Alsatian towns have become so accustomed to visits from German airmen that they pay scarcely more attention to them than they do to thunderstorms, going indoors to avoid the bombs just as they go indoors to avoid the rain. I remarked, indeed, as I motored through the country, that nearly every town through which we passed showed evidences, either by shattered roofs or shrapnel-spattered walls, of aeroplane bombardment. Thus is the war brought home to those who, dwelling many miles from the line of battle, might naturally suppose themselves safe from harm. In those

towns which are within range of the German guns the inhabitants are in double danger, yet the shops and schools are open, and the townspeople go about their business apparently wholly unmindful of the possibility that a shell may drop in on them at any moment. In St. Dié we stopped for lunch at the Hôtel Terminus, which is just opposite the railway station. St. Dié is within easy range of the German guns—or was when I was there—and when the Germans had nothing better to do they shelled it, centring their fire, as is their custom, upon the railway station, so as to interfere as much as possible with traffic and the movement of troops. The station and the adjacent buildings looked like cardboard boxes in which with a lead-pencil somebody had jabbed many ragged holes. The hotel, despite its upper floor having been wrecked by shell-fire only a few days previously, was open and doing business. Ranged upon the mantel of the dining-room was a row of German 77-millimetre shells, polished until you could see your face in them. “Where did you get those?” I asked the woman who kept the hotel. “Those are some German shells that fell in the garden

during the last bombardment, and didn't explode," she answered carelessly. "I had them unloaded—the man who did it made an awful fuss about it, too—and I use them for hot-water bottles. Sometimes it gets pretty cold here at night, and it's very comforting to have a nice hot shell in your bed."

From St. Dié to Le Rudlin, where the road ends, is in the neighbourhood of thirty miles, and we did it in not much over thirty minutes. We went so fast that the telegraph-poles looked like the palings in a picket fence, and we took the corners on two wheels—doubtless to save rubber. Of one thing I am quite certain : if I am killed in this war, it is not going to be by a shell or a bullet ; it is going to be in a military motor-car. No cars save military ones are permitted on the roads in the zone of operations, and for the military cars no speed limits exist. As a result, the drivers tear through the country as though they were running speed-trials at Brooklands. Sometimes, of course, a wheel comes off, or they meet another vehicle when going round a corner at full speed—and the next morning there is a military funeral. To be the driver of a military

car in the zone of operations is the joy-rider's dream come true. The soldier who drove my car steered with one hand because he had to use the other to illustrate the stories of his exploits in the trenches. Despite the fact that we were on a mountain road, one side of which dropped away into nothingness, when he related the story of how he captured six Germans single-handed he took both hands off the wheel to tell about it. It would have made Barney Oldfield's hair permanently pompadour.

At Le Rudlin, where there is an outpost of Alpine chasseurs, we left the car, and mounted mules for the ascent of the *Hautes Chaumes*, or High Moors, which crown the summit of the Vosges. Along this ridge ran the imaginary line which Bismarck made the boundary between Germany and France. Each mule was led by a soldier, whose short blue tunic, scarlet breeches, blue puttees, rakish blue *béret*, and rifle slung hunter-fashion across his back, made him look uncommonly like a Spanish brigand, while another soldier hung to the mule's tail to keep him on the path, which is as narrow and slippery as the path of virtue. Have you ever ridden the trail which leads from the rim of the



What the Germans did to the church at Ribecourt



On the summit of the Vosges

Mr. Powell standing beside one of the stone posts which formerly marked the frontier of Germany and France.

Grand Canyon down to the Colorado? Yes? Well, the trail which we took up to the *Hautes Chaumes* was in places like that, only more so. Yet over that and similar trails has passed an army of invasion, carrying with it, either on the backs of mules or on the backs of men, its guns, food, and ammunition, and sending back in like fashion its wounded. Reaching the summit, the trail debouched from the dense pine forest on to an open, wind-swept moor. Dotting the backbone of the ridge, far as the eye could see, ran a line of low stone boundary posts. On one side of each post was carved the letter F. On the other, the eastern face, was the letter D. Is it necessary to say that F stood for France and D for Deutschland? Squatting beside one of the posts was a French soldier busily engaged with hammer and chisel in cutting away the D. "It will not be needed again," he explained, grinning.

Leaving the mules in the shelter of the wood, we proceeded across the open tableland which crowns the summit of the ridge on foot, for, being now within both sight and range of the German batteries, there seemed no object in attracting more attention to ourselves than was

absolutely necessary. Half a mile or so beyond the boundary posts the plateau suddenly fell away in a sheer precipice, a thin screen of bushes bordering its brink. The topographical officer who had assumed the direction of the expedition at Le Rudlin motioned me to come forward. "Have a look," said he, "but be careful not to show yourself or to shake the bushes, or the Boches may send us a shell." Cautiously I peered through an opening in the branches. The mountain slope below me, almost at the foot of the cliff on which I stood, was scarred across by two great undulating yellow ridges. In places they were as much as a thousand yards apart, in others barely ten. I did not need to be told what they were. I knew. The ridge higher up the slope marked the line of the French trenches; the lower that of the German. From them came an incessant crackle and splutter which sounded like a forest fire. Sometimes it would die down until only an occasional shot would punctuate the mountain silence, and then, apparently without cause, it would rise into a clatter which sounded like an army of carpenters shingling a roof. In the forests on either side of us batteries were

at work steadily, methodically, and, though we could not see the guns, the frequent fountains of earth thrown up along both lines of trenches by bursting shells showed how heavy was the bombardment that was in progress, and how accurate was both the French and German fire. We were watching what the official *communiqué* described the next day as the fighting on the Fecht very much as one would watch a football game from the upper row of seats at the Oval. Above the forest at our right swayed a French observation balloon, tugging impatiently at its rope, while the observer, glasses glued to his eyes, telephoned to the commander of the battery in the wood below him where his shells were hitting. Suddenly, from the French position just below me, there rose, high above the duotone of rifle and artillery fire, the shrill clatter of a quick-firer. *Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat-tat* it went, for all the world like one of those machines which they use for riveting steel girders. And, when you come to think about it, that is what it *was* doing : riveting the bonds which bind Alsace to France.

I have heard it said that the French army has been opposed, and in many instances be-

trayed, by the people whom they thought they were liberating from the German yoke, and that consequently the feeling of the French soldiers for the Alsatians is very bitter. This assertion is not true. I talked with a great many people during my stay in Alsace—with the *maires* of towns, with shopkeepers, with peasant farmers, and with village priests—and I found that they welcomed the French as whole-heartedly as a citizen who hears a burglar in his house welcomes a policeman. I saw old men and women who had dwelt in Alsace before the Germans came, and who had given up all hope of seeing the beloved tricolour flying again above Alsatian soil, standing at the doors of their cottages, with tears coursing down their cheeks, while the endless columns of soldiery in the familiar uniform tramped by. In the schoolhouses of Alsace I saw French soldiers patiently teaching children of French blood, who have been born under German rule and educated under German schoolmasters, the meaning of "*Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité*," and that *p-a-t-r-i-e* spells France.

The change from Teutonic to Gallic rule is, however, by no means welcomed by all

Alsations. The Alsations of to-day, remember, are not the Alsations of 1870. It has been the consistent policy of the German Government to encourage, and where necessary, to assist German farmers to settle in Alsace, and as the years passed and the old hatred died down, these newcomers intermarried with the old French stock, so that to-day there are thousands of the younger generation in whose veins flow both French and German blood, and who scarcely know themselves to whom their allegiance belongs. As a result of this peculiar condition, both the French and German military authorities have to be constantly on their guard against treachery, for a woman bearing a French name may well be of German birth, while a man who speaks nothing but German may, nevertheless, be of pure French extraction. Hence spies, both French and German, abound. If the French Intelligence Department is well served, so is that of Germany. Peasants working in the fields, petty tradesmen in the towns, women of social position, and other women whose virtue is as easy as an old shoe, Germans dressed as priests, as hospital attendants, as Red Cross nurses,

sometimes in French uniforms and travelling in motor-cars with all the necessary papers—all help to keep the German military authorities informed of what is going on behind the French lines. Sometimes they signal by means of lamps, or by raising and lowering the shade of a lighted room of some lonely farmhouse ; sometimes by means of cunningly concealed telephone wires ; occasionally by the fashion in which the family washing is arranged upon a line within range of German telescopes, innocent-looking red-flamed petticoats, blue-linen blouses, and white undergarments being used instead of signal-flags to spell out messages in code. A plough with a white or grey horse has more than once indicated the position of a French battery to the German airmen. The movements of a flock of sheep, driven by a spy disguised as a peasant, has sometimes given similar information. On one occasion three German officers in a motor-car managed to get right through the British lines in Flanders. Two of them were disguised as French officers, who were supposed to be bringing back the third as a prisoner, he being, of course, in German uniform. So clever and daring was

their scheme that they succeeded in getting close to British Headquarters before they were detected and captured. They are no cowards who do this sort of work. They know perfectly well what it means if they are caught : sunrise, a wall, and a firing-party.

From the *Hautes Chaumes* we descended by a very steep and perilous path to the Lac Noir, where a battalion of Alpine chasseurs had built a cantonment at which we spent the night. The Lac Noir, or Black Lake, occupies the crater of an extinct volcano, whose rocky sides are so smooth and steep that it looks like a gigantic washtub, in which a weary Hercules might wash the clothing of the world. There were in the neighbourhood of a thousand chasseurs in camp on the shores of the Lac Noir when I was there, the *chef de brigade* having been, until the beginning of the war, military adviser to the President of China. The amazing democracy of the French army was illustrated by the fact that his second in command, Lieutenant-Colonel Messimy, was, until the change of Cabinet which took place after the battle of the Marne, Minister of War. The cantonment—"Black Lake City" Colonel

Messimy jokingly called it—looked far more like a summer camp in the Adirondacks than a soldiers' camp in Alsace. All the buildings were of logs, their roofs being covered with masses of green boughs to conceal them from inquisitive aeroplanes, and at the back of each hut, hollowed from the mountainside, was an underground shelter in which the men could take refuge in case of bombardment. Gravelled paths, sometimes bordered with flowers, wound amid the pine-trees; the officers' quarters had broad verandas, with ingeniously made rustic furniture upon them; the mess-tables were set under leafy arbours; there was a swimming-raft and a diving-board, and a sort of rustic pavilion known as the "Casino," where the men passed their spare hours in playing cards or danced to the music of a really excellent band. Over the doorway was a sign which read: "The music of the tambourine has been replaced by the music of the cannon." Though the Lac Noir was, when I was there, within the French lines, it was within range of the German batteries, which shelled it almost daily. The slopes of the crater on which the cantonment was built are so steep, however,

that the shells would miss the barracks altogether, dropping harmlessly in the middle of the little lake. The ensuing explosion would stun hundreds of fish, which would float upon the surface of the water, whereupon the soldiers would paddle out in a rickety flatboat and gather them in. In fact, a German bombardment came to mean that the chasseurs would have fish for dinner. This daily bombardment, which usually began just before sunset, the French called the "Evening Prayer." The first shot was the signal for the band to take position on that shore of the lake which could not be reached by the German shells, and play the Marseillaise, a bit of irony which afforded huge amusement to the French and excessive irritation to the Germans.

When the history of the campaign in the Vosges comes to be written, a great many pages will have to be devoted to recounting the exploits of the *chasseurs alpins*. The "Blue Devils," as the Germans have dubbed them, are the Highlanders of the French army, being recruited from the French slopes of the Alps and the Pyrenees. Tough as rawhide, keen as razors, hard as nails, they are the ideal

troops for mountain warfare. They wear a distinctive dark-blue uniform, and the *béret*, or cap, of the French Alps, a flat-topped, jaunty head-dress which is brother to the tam-o'-shanter. The frontier of Alsace, from a point opposite Strasburg to a point opposite Mülhausen, follows the summit of the Vosges, and over this range, which in places is upward of four thousand feet in height, have poured the French armies of invasion. In the van of those armies have marched the *chasseurs alpins*, dragged their guns by hand up the almost sheer precipices, and dragging the gun-mules after them ; advancing through forests so dense that they had to chop paths for the line regiments which followed them ; carrying by storm the apparently impregnable positions held by the Germans ; sleeping often without blankets and with the mercury hovering near zero on the heights which they had captured ; taking their batteries into positions where it was believed no batteries could go ; raining shells from those batteries upon the wooded slopes ahead, and, under cover of that fire, advancing, always advancing. Think of what it meant to get a great army over such a mountain

range in the face of desperate opposition ; think of the labour involved in transporting the enormous supplies of food, clothing, and ammunition required by that army ; think of the sufferings of the wounded who had to be taken back across those mountains, many of them in the depths of winter, sometimes in litters, sometimes lashed to the backs of mules. The mule, whether from the Alps, the Pyrenees, or from Missouri, is playing a brave part in this mountain warfare, and whenever I saw one I felt like the motorist who, after his automobile had been hauled out of an apparently bottomless Southern bog by a negro who happened to be passing with a mule team, said to his son : “ My boy, from now on always raise your hat to a mule.”

Just as the crimson disk of the sun peered cautiously over the crater's rim, we bade good-bye to our friends the *chasseurs alpins*, and turned the noses of our mules up the mountains. As we reached the summit of the range, the little French captain who was acting as our guide halted us with a gesture. “ Look over there,” he said, pointing to where, far beyond the trench-scarred hillsides,

a great, broad valley was swimming in the morning mists. There were green squares which I knew for meadow-lands, and yellow squares which were fields of ripening grain ; here and there were clusters of white-walled, red-roofed houses, with ancient church-spires rising above them ; and winding down the middle of the plain was a broad grey ribbon which turned to silver when the sun struck upon it.

“ Look,” said the little captain again, and there was a break in his voice. “ That is what we are fighting for. That is Alsace.”

Then I knew that I was looking upon what is, to every man of Gallic birth, the Promised Land ; I knew that the great, dim bulk which loomed against the distant skyline was the Black Forest ; I knew that somewhere up that mysterious, alluring valley, Strasburg sat, like an Andromeda waiting to be freed ; and that the broad, silent-flowing river which I saw below me was none other than the Rhine.

And as I looked I recalled another scene, on another continent and beside another river, two years before. I was standing with a coloured cavalry sergeant of the border patrol

on the banks of the Rio Grande, and we were looking southward to where the mountains of Chihuahua rose, purple, mysterious, forbidding, grim, against the evening sky. On the Mexican side of the river a battle was in progress.

"I suppose," I remarked to my companion, "that you'll be mighty glad when orders come to cross the border and clean things up over there in Mexico."

"Mistah," he answered earnestly, "we ain't nevah gwine tuh *cross* dat bodah, but one of these yere days wese a gwine tuh pick dat bodah up an' carry it right down to Panama."

And that is what the French are doing in Alsace. They have not crossed the border, but they have picked the border up, and are carrying it right down to the banks of the Rhine.

IV. THE RETAKING OF ALSACE

WHEN I asked the general commanding the armies operating in Alsace for permission to visit the fire-trenches, I did it merely as a matter of form. I was quite prepared to be met with a polite but firm refusal, for it is as difficult to get into the French trenches as it is to get behind the scenes of a West End theatre on the first night of a big production. This, understand, is not from any solicitude for your safety, but because a fire-trench is usually a very busy place indeed, and a visitor is apt to get in the way and make himself a nuisance generally. Imagine my astonishment, then, when the general said, "Certainly, if you wish," just as though he were giving me permission to visit his stables or his gardens. I might add that almost every correspondent who has succeeded in getting to the French front has been taken, with a vast deal of ceremony and precaution, into a trench of some sort, thus giving him an experience to tell about all the rest of his life, but those who

have been permitted to visit the actual fire-trenches might almost be numbered on one's fingers. In this respect the French have been much less accommodating than the Belgians or the Germans. The fire, or first-line, trench, is the one nearest the enemy, and both from it and against it there is almost constant firing. The difference between a second-line, or reserve trench, and a fire-trench is the difference between sitting in a comfortable orchestra stall and in being on the stage and a part of the show.

Before they took me out to the trenches we lunched in Dannemarie, or, as it used to be known under German rule, Dammerkirch. Though the town was within easy range of the German guns, and was shelled by them on occasion, the motto of the townsfolk seemed to be "business as usual," for the shops were busy and the schools were open. We had lunch at the local inn: it began with fresh lobster, followed by *omelette au fromage*, spring lamb, and asparagus, and ended with strawberries, and it cost me half a crown, wine included. From which you will gather that the people behind the French lines are not suffering for food.

Just outside Dannemarie the railway crosses the River Ill by three tremendous viaducts eighty feet in height. When, early in the war, the Germans fell back before the impetuous French advance, they effectually stopped railway traffic by blowing up one of these viaducts behind them. Urged by the railway company, which preferred to have the Government foot the bill, the viaduct was rebuilt by the French military authorities, and a picture of the ceremony which marked its inauguration by the Minister of War was published in one of the Paris illustrated papers. The jubilation of the French was a trifle premature, however, for a few days later the Germans moved one of their monster siege-guns into position and, at a range of eighteen miles, sent over a shell which again put the viaduct out of commission. That explains, perhaps, why the censorship is so strict on pictures taken in the zone of operations.

Dannemarie is barely ten miles from that point where the French and German trenches, after zigzagging across more than four hundred miles of European soil, come to an abrupt end against the frontier of Switzerland. The Swiss, who are taking no chances of having the viola-

tion of Belgium repeated with their own country for the victim, have at this point massed a heavy force of extremely businesslike-looking troops, the frontier is marked by a line of wire entanglements, and a military zone has been established, civilians not being permitted to approach within a mile or more of the border. When I was in that region the French officers gave a dinner to the officers in command of the Swiss frontier force opposite them. That there might be no embarrassing breaches of neutrality the table was set exactly on the international boundary, so that the Swiss officers sat in Switzerland, and the French officers sat in France. One of the amusing incidents of the war was when the French "put one over" on the Germans at the beginning of hostilities in this region. Taking advantage of a sharp angle in the contour of the Swiss frontier, the French posted one of their batteries in such a position, that though it could sweep the German trenches, it was so close to the border that whenever the German guns replied their shells fell on Swiss soil, and an international incident was created.

The trenches in front of Altkirch, and indeed

throughout Alsace, are flanked by patches of dense woods, and it is in these woods that the cantonments for the men are built, and amid their leafy recesses that the soldiers spend their time when off duty in sleeping, smoking, and card-playing. Though the German batteries periodically rake the woods with shell-fire, it is an almost total waste of ammunition, for the men simply retreat to the remarkable underground cities which they have constructed, and stay there until the shell-storm is over. The troglodyte habitations which have come into existence along the entire length of the western battle-front are perhaps the most curious products of this siege warfare. In these dwellings burrowed out of the earth the soldiers of France live as the cavemen lived before the dawn of civilization. A dozen to twenty feet below the surface of the ground, and so strongly roofed over with logs and earth as to render their occupants safe from the most torrential rain of high explosive, I was shown rooms with sleeping-quarters for a hundred men apiece, blacksmiths' and carpenters' shops, a recreation-room where the men lounged and smoked and read the papers and wrote to the folks at home, a



Zouave creeping out to a listening-post in front
of the trenches near Nieuport



The straggling columns of unkempt unshaven men were in striking contrast to the helmeted giants on gigantic horses who guarded them

telegraph station, a telephone exchange from which one could talk with any section of the trenches, with division headquarters, or with Paris ; a bathing establishment with hot and cold water and shower-baths ; a barber's shop—all with board floors, free from dampness, and surprisingly clean. The trenches and passage-ways connecting these underground dwellings were named and marked like city streets—the Avenue Joffre, the Avenue Foch, the Rue des Victoires—and many of them were lighted by electricity. The bedroom of an artillery officer, twenty feet underground, had its walls and ceiling covered with flowered cretonne—heaven knows where he got it !—and the tiny windows of the division commander's headquarters, though they gave only on a wall of yellow mud, were hung with dainty muslin curtains—evidently the work of a woman's loving fingers. In one place a score of steps led down to a passage-way whose mud walls were so close together that I brushed one with either elbow as I passed. On this subterranean corridor doors—real doors—opened. One of these doors led into an officer's sitting-room. The floor and walls were covered with planed wood and

there was even an attempt at polish. The rustic furniture was excellently made. Beside the bed was a telephone and an electric-light, and on a rude table was a brass shell-case filled with wild flowers. On the walls the occupant had tacked pictures of his wife and children in a pitiful attempt to make this hole in the ground look "homelike."

But don't get the idea, from anything that I have said, that life in the trenches is anything more than endurable. Two words describe it : misery and muck. War is not only fighting, as many people seem to think. Bronchitis is more deadly than bullets. Pneumonia does more harm than poison-gas. Shells are less dangerous than lack of sanitation. To be attacked by strange and terrible diseases ; to stand day after day, week after week, between walls of oozy mud and amid seas of slime ; to be eaten alive by vermin ; to suffer the intolerable irritation of the itch ; to be caked with mud and filth ; to go for weeks and perhaps for months with no opportunity to bathe ; to be so foul of person that you are an offence to all who come near—such are the real horrors of the trench.

Yet, when the circumstances are taken into

consideration, the French soldier is admirably cared for. His health is carefully looked after. He is well fed, well clothed, and, following the policy of conserving by every possible means the lives of the men, he is afforded every protection that human ingenuity can devise. The képi has been replaced by the trench-helmet, a light casque of blued steel, which will protect a man's brain-pan from shell-splinter, shrapnel, or grenade, and which has saved many a man's life. Rather a remarkable thing, is it not, that the French soldier of to-day should adopt a head-dress almost identical with the casque worn by his ancestor, the French man-at-arms of the Middle Ages ? I am convinced that it is this policy of conserving the lives of her fighting-men which is going to win the war for France. If necessity demands that a position be taken with the bayonet, no soldiers in the world sacrifice themselves more freely than the French, but the military authorities have realized that men, unlike shells, cannot be replaced. "The duration and the outcome of the war," General de Maud'huy remarked to me, "depend upon how fast we can kill off the Germans. Their

army has reached its maximum strength, and every day sees it slowly but surely weakening. Our game, therefore, is to kill as many as possible of the enemy while at the same time saving our own men. It is, after all, a purely mathematical proposition."

I believe that the losses incidental to trench warfare, as it is being conducted in Alsace, have been considerably exaggerated. The officer in command of the French positions in front of Altkirch told me that, during the construction of some of the trenches, the Germans rained twelve thousand shells upon the working parties, yet not a man was killed and only ten were wounded. The modern trench is so ingeniously constructed that, even in the comparatively rare event of a shell dropping squarely into it, only the soldiers in the immediate vicinity, seldom more than half a dozen at the most, are injured, the others being protected from the flying steel by the traverses, earthen walls which partially intersect the trench at intervals of a few yards. In the trench one has only to keep one's head down, and he is nearly as safe as though he were at home. To crouch, to move bowed,

always to keep the parapet between your head and the German riflemen, becomes an instinct, like the lock-step which used to be the rule for the convicts at Sing Sing.

So cleverly have the French engineers taken advantage of the configuration of the country in front of Altkirch, that we were able to enter the *boyaux*, or communication trenches, without leaving the shelter of the wood. Half an hour's brisk walking through what would, in times of peace, be called a ditch, perhaps three feet wide and seven deep, its earthen walls kept in place by wattles of woven willows, and with as many twists and turns as the maze at Hampton Court, brought us at last into the fire-trenches. These were considerably roomier than the *boyaux*, being in places six feet wide and having a sort of raised step or platform of earth, on which the men stood to fire, running along the side nearest the enemy. Each soldier was protected by a steel shield about the size of a newspaper, and painted a lead-grey, set in the earth of the parapet. In the centre of the shield is cut an opening slightly larger than a playing-card, through which the soldier pokes his rifle when he wishes to fire, and which,

when not in use, is screened by a steel shutter or a cloth curtain, so that the riflemen in the German trench cannot see anyone who may happen to pass behind it. At intervals of five or six yards men were on watch, with their rifles laid. Their instructions are never to take their eyes off the enemy's trenches, a shout from them bringing their comrades tumbling out of their dug-outs just as firemen respond to the clang of the fire-bell. When the men come rushing out of the shelters they have, in the earth platform, a good steady footing which will bring their heads level with the parapet, where their rifles, leaning against the steel shields, await them. It is planned always to keep a sufficient force in the fire-trenches, so that, roughly speaking, there will be a man to every yard, which is about as close as they can fight to advantage. Every thirty yards or so, in a log-roofed shelter known as a gun-pit, is a machine gun, though in the German trenches it is not at all uncommon to find a machine gun to every fifteen men.

As we passed through the trenches I noticed at intervals of a hundred yards or so men, standing motionless as statues, who seemed to

be intently listening. And that, I found, was precisely what they were doing. In this trench warfare men are specially told off to listen, both above and beneath the ground, for any sapping or mining operations on the part of the enemy. Without this precaution there would be the constant danger of the Germans driving a tunnel under the French trenches (or vice versa) and, by means of a mine, blowing those trenches and the men in them into the air. Indeed, scarcely a night passes that soldiers, armed with knives and pistols, do not crawl out on hands and knees between the trenches in order to find out, by holding the ear to the ground, whether the enemy is sapping. Should the listener hear the muffled sounds which would suggest that the enemy was driving a mine, he tells it in a whisper to his companion, who crawls back to his own trenches with the message, whereupon the engineers immediately take steps to start a counter-mine.

“Look through here,” said the intelligence officer who was acting as my guide, indicating the porthole in one of the steel shields, “but don’t stay too long or a German sharpshooter may spot you. A second is long enough to

get a bullet through the brain." Cautiously applying my eye to the opening, I saw, perhaps a hundred yards away, a long, low mound of earth, such as would be thrown up from a sewer excavation, and dotting it at three-foot intervals darker patches which I knew to be just such steel shields as the one behind which I was sheltered. And I knew that behind each one of those steel shields was standing a keen-eyed rifleman searching for something suspicious at which to fire. Immediately in front of the German trench, just as in front of the trench in which I stood, a forest of stout stakes had been driven deep into the ground, and draped between these stakes were countless strands of barbed wire, so snarled and tangled, and interlaced and woven that a cat could not have got through unscratched. Between the two lines of entanglements stretched a field of ripening wheat, streaked here and there with patches of scarlet poppies. There were doubtless other things besides poppies amid that wheat, but, thank God it was high enough to hide them. Rising from the wheatfield, almost midway between the French and German lines, was a solitary

apple-tree. "Behind that tree," whispered the officer standing beside me—for some reason they always speak in hushed tones in the trenches—"is a German outpost. He crawls out every morning before sunrise and is relieved at dark. Though some of our men keep their rifles constantly laid on the tree, we've never been able to get him. Still, he's not a very good life-insurance risk, eh?" And I agreed that he certainly was not.

I must have remained at my loophole a little too long or possibly some movement of mine attracted the attention of a German sniper, for *pang* came a bullet against the shield behind which I was standing, with the same ringing, metallic sound which a bullet makes when it hits the iron target in a shooting-gallery. In this case, however, *I* was the bull's eye. Had that bullet been two inches nearer the centre there would have been, in the words of the poet, "more work for the undertaker, another little job for the casket-maker."

"Lucky for you that wasn't one of the new armour-piercing bullets," remarked the officer as I hastily stepped down. "After the Germans introduced the steel shields we went them

one better by introducing a jacketed bullet which will go through a sheet of armour-plate as though it were made of cheese. We get lots of amusement from them. Sometimes one of our men will fire a dozen rounds of ordinary ammunition at a shield behind which he hears some Boches talking, and as the bullets glance off harmlessly they laugh and jeer at him. Then he slips in one of the jacketed bullets and—*whang!!!*—we hear a wounded Boche yelping like a dog that has been run over by a motor-car. Funny thing about the Germans. They're brave enough—no one questions that—but they scream like animals when they're wounded."

From all that I could gather, the French did not have a particularly high opinion of the quality of the troops opposed to them in Alsace, most of whom, at the time I was there, were Bavarians and Saxons. An officer in the trenches on the Hartmannswillerkopf, where the French and German positions were in places very close together, told me that whenever the Germans attempted an attack the French trenches burst into so fierce a blast of rifle and machine-gun fire that the men in the spiked

helmets refused to face it. "Vorwärts ! Vorwärts !" the German officers would scream, exposing themselves recklessly. "Nein ! Nein !" the fear-maddened men would answer as they broke and ran for the shelter of their trenches. Then the French would hear the angry bark of automatics as the officers pistolled their men.

When the French, in one of the bloodiest and most desperate assaults of the war, carried the summit of the Hartmannswillerkopf by storm, they claim to have found the German machine-gun crews chained to their guns as galley-slaves were chained to their oars. French artillery officers have repeatedly told me that when German infantry advance to take a position by assault, the men are frequently urged forward by their own batteries raking them from the rear. As the German gunners gradually advance their fire as the infantry moves forward, it is as dangerous for the men to retreat as to go on. Hence it is by no means uncommon, so the French officers assert, for the German troops to arrive pell-mell at the French trenches, breathless, terrified, hands above their heads,

seeking not a fight but a chance to surrender.

One of the assertions that you hear repeated everywhere along the French lines, by officers and men alike, is that the German does not fight fair, that you cannot trust him, that he is not bound by any of the recognized rules of the game. Innumerable instances have been related to me of wounded Germans attempting to shoot or stab the French surgeons and nurses who were caring for them. An American serving in the Foreign Legion told me that on one occasion, when his regiment carried a German position by assault, the wounded Germans lying on the ground waited until the legionaries had passed, and then shot them in the back. Now, when the Foreign Legion goes into action, each company is followed by men with axes, whose business it is to see that such incidents do not happen again.

The reason for the French soldier's deep-seated distrust of the German is illustrated by a grim comedy of which I heard when I was in Alsace.

A company of German infantry was defending a stone-walled farmstead on the Fecht.



Each soldier is protected by a steel shield in the centre of which is cut an opening slightly longer than a playing card



A *poilu* in the Vosges



A French soldier wearing a mask as a protection against gas

In the trenches in Alsace



Convoy of German prisoners guarded by Moroccan Spahis

So murderous was the fire of the French batteries that soon a white sheet was seen waving from one of the farmhouse windows. The French fire ceased, and through the gateway came a group of Germans, holding their hands above their heads and shouting : “ Kameranad ! Kameranad ! ” which has become the euphemism for “ I surrender.” But when a detachment of chasseurs went forward to take them prisoners the Germans suddenly dropped to the ground, while from an upper window in the farmhouse a hidden machine gun poured a stream of lead into the unsuspecting Frenchmen. Thereupon the French batteries proceeded to transform that farmhouse into a sieve. In a quarter of an hour the tablecloth was again seen waving, the French guns again ceased firing, and again the Germans came crowding out, with their hands above their heads. But this time they were stark naked ! To prove that they had no concealed weapons they had stripped to the skin. It is scarcely necessary to add that those Germans were *not* taken prisoners.

Though the incidents I have above related were told me by officers who claimed to have

witnessed them, and whose reliability I have no reason to doubt, I do not vouch for them, mind you ; I merely repeat them for what they are worth.

I had, of course, heard many stories of the German ranks being filled with boys and old men, but the large convoys of prisoners which I saw in Alsace and in Champagne convinced me that there is but little truth in the assertion. Some of the prisoners, it is true, looked as though they should have been in high school, and others as though they had been called from old soldiers' homes, but these formed only a sprinkling of the whole. By far the greater part of the prisoners that I saw were men between eighteen and forty, and they all impressed me as being in the very pink of physical condition and this despite the fact that they were dirty and hungry and very, very tired. But they struck me as being not at all averse to being captured. They seemed exhausted and dispirited and crushed, as though all the fight had gone out of them. In those long columns of weary, dirty men were represented all the Teutonic types : arrogant, supercilious Prussians ; strapping young peasants from the

Silesian farm-lands ; tradesmen and mechanics from the great industrial centres ; men from the mines of Würtemberg and the forests of Baden ; scowling Bavarians and smiling Saxons. Among them were some brutish faces, accentuated, no doubt, by the close-cropped hair which makes any man look like a convict, but the countenances of most of them were frank and honest and open. Two things aroused my curiosity. The first was that I did not see a helmet—a *pickelhaube*—among them. When I asked the reason they explained that they had been captured in the fire-trenches, and that they seldom wear their helmets there, as the little round grey caps with the scarlet band are less conspicuous and more comfortable. The other thing that aroused my curiosity was when I saw French soldiers, each with a pair of scissors, going from prisoner to prisoner.

“What on earth are you doing ?” I asked.

“We are cutting the braces of the Boches,” was the answer. “Their trousers are made very large around the waist so that if their braces are cut they have to hold them up with their hands, thus making it difficult for them to run away.”

As I looked at these unshaven, unkempt men in their soiled and tattered uniforms, it was hard to make myself believe that they had been a part of that immaculate, confident, and triumphant army which I had seen roll across Belgium like a tidal wave in the late summer of 1914.

Though the French and German positions in Alsace are rarely less than a hundred yards apart and usually considerably more, there is one point on the line, known as La Fontenelle, where, owing to a peculiar rocky formation, *the French and German trenches are within six yards of each other.* The only reason one side does not blow up the other by means of mines is because the vein of rock which separates them is too hard to tunnel through. In cases when the trenches are exceptionally close together, the men have the comfort of knowing that they are at least safe from shell-fire, for, as the battery commanders are perfectly aware that the slightest error in calculating the range, or the least deterioration in the rifling of the guns, would result in their shells landing among their own men, they generally play



A German communication trench captured by the French
“The earth is littered with the unburied portions of what had once been human beings.”



“In this war the hand-grenade is King. Beside it the high-power rifle is a joke”

safe and concentrate their fire on the enemy's second-line trenches instead of on the first-line. The fighting in these close-up positions has consequently degenerated into a warfare of bombs, hand-grenades, poison-gas, burning oil, and other methods reminiscent of the Middle Ages. As a protection against bombs and hand-grenades, some of the trenches which I visited had erected along their parapets ten-foot-high screens of wire netting, like the back nets of tennis-courts.

In this war the hand-grenade is king. Compared with it the high-power rifle is a joke. The grenadier regiments again deserve the name. For cleaning out a trench or stopping a massed charge there is nothing like a well-aimed volley of hand-grenades. I believe that the total failure of the repeated German attempts to break through on the western front is due to three causes: the overwhelming superiority of the French artillery; the French addiction to the use of the bayonet—for the Germans do not like cold steel; and to the remarkable proficiency of the French in the use of hand-grenades. The grenade commonly used by the French is of the "bracelet" type,

consisting of a cast-iron ball filled with explosive. The thrower wears on his wrist a leather loop or bracelet which is prolonged by a piece of cord about a foot in length with an iron hook at the end. Just before the grenade is thrown, the hook is passed through the ring of a friction-pin inside the firing-plug which closes the iron ball. By a sharp backward turn of the wrist when the grenade is thrown, the ring, with the friction-pin held back by the hook, is torn off, the grenade itself continuing on its brief journey of destruction. The French also use a primed grenade attached to a sort of wooden racket, which can be quickly improvised on the spot, and which, from its form, is popularly known as the "hair-brush." To acquire proficiency in the use of grenades requires considerable practice for the novice who attempts to throw one of these waspish-tempered missiles is as likely to blow up his comrades as he is the enemy. So at various points along the front the French have established bomb-throwing schools, under competent instructors, where the soldiers are taught the proper method of throwing grenades, just as, at the winter training-camps in America,

candidates for the big leagues are taught the proper method of throwing a baseball.

Some of the grenades are too large to be thrown by hand and so they are hurled into the enemy's trenches by various ingenious machines designed for the purpose. There is, for example, the *sauterelle*, a modern adaptation of the ancient arbalist, which can toss a bomb the size of a nail-keg into a trench ninety feet away. Mortars which did good service in the days of Bertrand du Guesclin have been unearthed from ancient citadels, and in the trenches are again barking defiance at the enemies of France. Because of their frog-like appearance, the soldiers have dubbed them *crapouillots*, and they are used for throwing bombs of the horned variety, which look more than anything else like snails pushing their heads out of their shells. Still another type, known as the *taupia*, consists merely of a German 77-millimetre shell-case with a touch-hole bored in the base so that it can be fired by a match. This little improvised mortar, whose name was no doubt coined from the French word for "mole" (*taupe*) as appropriate to underground warfare throws a tin containing

two and a quarter pounds of high explosive for a short distance with considerable accuracy. Still another type of bomb is hurled from a catapult, which does not differ materially from those which were used at the siege of Troy. Doubtless the most accurate and effective of all the bombs used in this trench warfare is the so-called air-torpedo, a cigar-shaped shell about thirty inches long and weighing thirty-three pounds, which is fitted with steel fins, like the feathers on an arrow and for the same purpose. This projectile, which is fired from a specially designed mortar, has an effective range of five hundred yards and carries a charge of high explosive sufficient to demolish everything within a radius of twenty feet. Tens of thousands of these torpedoes of the air were used during the French offensive in Champagne and created terrible havoc in the German trenches. But by far the most imposing of these trench projectiles is the great air-mine, weighing two hundred and thirty-six pounds and as large as a barrel, which is fired from an 80-millimetre mountain gun with the wheels removed and mounted on an oak platform. In the case of both the air-torpedo and

the air-mine the projectile does not enter the barrel of the gun from which it is fired, but is attached to a tube which alone receives the propulsive force. At first the various forms of trench mortars—*minenwerfer*, the Germans call them—were unsatisfactory because they were not accurate and could not be depended upon, no one being quite sure whether the resulting explosion was going to occur in the French trenches or in the German. They have been greatly improved, however, and though no attempt has been made to give them velocity, they drop their bombs with reasonable accuracy. You can see them plainly as they end-over-end toward you, like beer-bottles or beer-barrels coming through the air.

Nor does this by any means exhaust the list of killing devices which have been produced by this war. There is, for example, the little, insignificant-looking bomb with wire triggers sticking out from it in all directions, like the pricklers on a horse-chestnut burr. These bombs are thickly strewn over the ground between the trenches. If the enemy attempts to charge across that ground some soldier is almost certain to step on one of those little

trigger-wires. To collect that soldier's remains it would be necessary to use a pail and shovel. The Germans are said to dig shallow pools outside their trenches and cement the bottoms of those pools and fill them with acid, which is masked by boughs or straw. Any soldiers who stumbled into those pools of acid would have their feet burned off. This I have not seen, but I have been assured that it is so. Along certain portions of the front the orthodox barbed-wire entanglements are giving way to great spirals of heavy telegraph wire, which, lying loose upon the ground, envelop and hamper an advancing force like the tentacles of a giant cuttlefish. This wire comes in coils about three feet in diameter, but instead of unwinding it the coils are opened out into a sort of spiral cage, which can be rolled over the tops of the trenches without exposing a man. A bombardment which would wipe the ordinary barbed-wire entanglement out of existence, does this new form of obstruction comparatively little harm, while the wire is so tough and heavy that the soldiers with nippers who precede a storming-party cannot cut it. Another novel contrivance is the hinged

entanglement, a sort of barbed-wire fence which when not in use, lies flat upon the ground, where it is but little exposed to shell-fire, but which, by means of wires running back to the trenches, can be pulled upright in case of an attack, so that the advancing troops suddenly find themselves confronted by a formidable and unexpected barrier. In cases where the lines are so close together that for men to expose themselves would mean almost certain death, *chevaux-de-frise* of steel and wire are constructed in the shelter of the trenches and pushed over the parapet with poles. The French troops now frequently advance to the assault, carrying huge rolls of thick linoleum, which is unrolled and thrown across the entanglements, thus forming a sort of bridge, by means of which the attacking force is enabled to cross the river of barbed wire in front of the German trenches.

It is not safe to assert that anything relating to this war is untrue merely because it is incredible. I have with my own eyes seen things which, had I been told about them before the war began, I would have set down as the imaginings of a disordered mind. Some one

asked me if I knew that the scene-painters of the French theatres had been mobilized and formed into a battalion for the purpose of painting scenery to mask gun-positions—and I laughed at the story. Since then I have seen gun-positions so hidden. Suppose that it is found necessary to post a battery in the open, where no cover is available. In the ordinary course of events the German airmen would discover those guns before they had fired a dozen rounds, and the German batteries would promptly proceed to put them out of action. So they erect over them a sort of tent, and the scene-painters are set to work so to paint that tent, that from a little distance, it cannot be distinguished from the surrounding scenery. If it is on the Belgian littoral they will paint it to look like a sand-dune. If it is in the wooded country of Alsace or the Argonne they will so paint it that, seen from an aeroplane, it will look like a clump of trees. I have seen a whole row of aeroplane hangars, each of them the size of a church, so cleverly painted that, from a thousand feet above, they could not be seen at all. A road over which there is heavy traffic lies within both range and sight of the enemy's

guns. Anything seen moving along that road instantly becomes the target for a rain of shells. So along the side of the road nearest the enemy is raised a screen of canvas, like those which surround the side-shows at the circus, but, instead of being decorated with lurid representations of the Living Skeleton and the Wild Man from Borneo and the Fattest Woman on Earth, and the Siamese Twins, it is painted to represent a row of trees such as commonly border French highways. Behind that canvas screen horse, foot, and guns can then be moved in safety, though the road must be kept constantly sprinkled so that the suspicions of the German observers shall not be aroused by a tell-tale cloud of dust. The stalking-screen is a device used for approaching big game by sportsmen the world over. Now the idea has been applied by the French to warfare, the big game being in this case Germans. The screens are of steel plates covered with canvas so painted that it looks like a length of trench, the deception being heightened by sticking to the canvas tufts of grass. Thus screened from the enemy, two or three men may secretly keep watch at points considerably in advance of the

real trenches, creeping forward as opportunity offers, pushing their scenery before them. Both sides have long been daubing field-guns and caissons and other bulky equipment with all the colours of the rainbow, like a futurist landscape, so that they assume the properties of a chameleon and become indistinguishable from the landscape. Now they are painting the faces of the snipers, and splashing their uniforms and rifle barrels with many colours and tying to their heads wisps of grass and foliage. But the crowning touch was when the French began systematically to paint their white horses with permanganate so as to turn them into less obtrusive browns and sorrels.

Hollowed at frequent intervals from the earthen back walls of the trenches are niches, in each of which is kept a bottle of hyposulphate of soda and a pail of water. When the yellow cloud which denotes that the Germans have turned loose their poison-gas comes rolling down upon them, the soldiers hastily empty the hyposulphate into the water, saturate in the solution thus formed a pad of gauze which they always carry with them, fasten it over the mouth and nostrils by means of an elastic, and, as an additional precaution, draw over the



“ Movable entanglements are constructed in the shelter of the trenches and pushed over the parapet with poles so that the men do not have to expose themselves ”



“ When the poison-gas comes rolling down upon the trenches the soldiers fasten over the mouth and nostrils a pad of gauze saturated in a hyposulphate solution ”

head a bag of blue linen with a piece of mica set in the front and a draw-string to pull it tight about the neck. Thus protected and looking strangely like the hooded familiars of the Inquisition, they are able to remain at their posts without fear of asphyxiation. But no protection has as yet been devised against the terrible flame projector which has been introduced on several portions of the western front by the Germans. It is a living sheet of flame, caused by a gas believed to be oxyacetylene, and is probably directed through a powerful air-jet. The pressure of the air must be enormous, for the flame, which springs from the ground level and expands into a roaring wave of fire, chars and burns everything within thirty yards. The flame is, indeed, very like that of the common blowpipe used by plumbers, but instead of being used upon lead pipe it is used upon human flesh and bone.

But poison-gas and flame projectors are by no means the most devilish of the devices introduced by the Germans. The soldiers of the Kaiser have now adopted the weapon of the jealous prostitute and are throwing vitriol. The acid is contained in fragile globes or phials which break upon contact, scattering the liquid

fire upon everything in the immediate vicinity. I might add that I do not make this assertion except after the fullest investigation and confirmation. I have not only talked with officers and men who were in the trenches into which these vitriol bombs were thrown, but American ambulance drivers both in the Vosges and the Argonne told me that they had carried to the hospitals French soldiers whose faces had been burned almost beyond recognition.

“But we captured one of the vitriol-throwers,” said an officer who was telling me about the hellish business. “He was pretty badly burned himself.”

“I suppose you shot him then and there,” said I.

“Oh, no,” was the answer, “we sent him along with the other prisoners.”

“You don’t mean to say,” I exclaimed, indignation in my voice, “that you captured a man who had been throwing vitriol at your soldiers and let him live ?”

“Naturally,” said the officer quietly. “There was nothing else to do. You see, monsieur, we French are civilized.”

V. THE FIGHTING IN CHAMPAGNE

WHEN the history of this war comes to be written, the great French offensive which began on September 25, 1915, midway between Rheims and Verdun, will doubtless be known as the Battle of Champagne. Hell holds no horrors for one who has seen that battlefield. Could Dante have walked beside me across that dreadful place, which had been transformed by human agency from a peaceful countryside to a garbage heap, a cesspool, and a charnel-house combined, he would never have written his "Inferno," because the hell of his imagination would have seemed colourless and tame. The difficulty in writing about it is that people will not believe me. I shall be accused of imagination and exaggeration, whereas the truth is that no one could imagine, much less exaggerate, the horrors that I saw upon those rolling, chalky plains.

In order that you may get clearly in your

mind the setting of this titanic conflict, in which nearly a million and a half Frenchmen and Germans were engaged and in which Europe lost more men in killed and wounded than fought at Gettysburg, get out your atlas, and on the map of eastern France draw a more or less irregular line from Rheims to Verdun. This line roughly corresponds to the battle-front in Champagne. On the south side of it were the French, on the north the Germans. About midway between Rheims and Verdun mark off on that line a sector of some fifteen miles. If you have a sufficiently large-scale map, the hamlet of Auberive may be taken as one end of the sector and Massiges as the other. This, then, was the spot chosen by the French for their sledge-hammer blow against the German wall of steel.

There is scarcely a region in all France where a battle could have been fought with less injury to property. Imagine, if you please, an immense undulating plain, its surface broken by occasional low hills and ridges, none of them much over six hundred feet in height, and wandering in and out between those ridges the narrow stream which is the Marne. The



The battle-field of Champagne

It looks and smells as though upon it had been emptied all the garbage cans in Europe and America



Bringing in the wounded during the battle of Champagne
 This battle cost Europe more men in killed and wounded than fought at Gettysburg



German officers captured during the battle of Champagne
 It was hard to believe that these weary, dirty, dispirited men had formed part of that confident, immaculate, and triumphant army which had rolled across Belgium like a tidal wave in the late summer of 1914.

country hereabouts is very sparsely settled ; the few villages that dot the plain are wretchedly poor ; the trees on the slopes of the ridges are stunted and scraggly ; the soil is of chalky marl, which you have only to scratch to leave a staring scar, and the grass which tries to grow upon it seems to wither and die of a broken heart. This was the great manœuvre ground of Chalons, and it was good for little else, yet only a few miles to the westward begin the vineyards which are France's chief source of wealth, and an hour's journey to the eastward is the beautiful forest of the Argonne.

Virtually, the entire summer of 1915 was spent by the French in making their preparations for the great offensive. These preparations were assisted by the extension of the British front as far as the Somme, thus releasing a large number of French troops for the operations in Champagne ; by the formation of new French units ; and by the extraordinary quantity of ammunition made available by hard and continuous work in the factories. The volume of preparatory work was stupendous. Artillery of every pattern and calibre, from the light mountain guns to the monster weapons

which the workers of Le Creusot and Bourges and prophetically christened "*Les Vainqueurs*," was gradually assembled until nearly three thousand guns had been concentrated on a front of only fifteen miles. Had the guns been placed side by side they would have extended far beyond the fifteen-mile battle-front. There were cannon everywhere. Each battery had a designated spot to fire at and a score of captive balloons with telephonic connections directed the fire. One battery was placed just opposite a German redoubt which, the Germans boasted, could be held against the whole French army by two washerwomen with machine guns. Behind each of the French guns were stacked two thousand shells. A network of light railways was built in order to get this enormous supply of ammunition up to the guns. From the end of the railway they built a macadamized highway, forty feet wide and nine miles long, straight as a ruler across the rolling plain. Underground shelters for the men were dug and underground stores for the arms and ammunition. The field was dotted with subterranean first-aid stations, their locations indicated by sign-boards with scarlet arrows

and by the Red Cross flags flying over them. That the huge masses of infantry to be used in the attack might reach their stations without being annihilated by German shell-fire, the French dug forty miles of reserve and communication trenches, ten miles of which were wide enough for four men to walk abreast. Hospitals all over France were emptied and put in readiness for the river of wounded which would soon come flowing in. In addition to all this, moral preparation was also necessary, for it was a question whether the preceding months of trench warfare and the individual character it gives to actions had not affected the control of the officers over their men. Everything was foreseen and provided for ; nothing was left to chance. The French had undertaken the biggest job in the world, and they set about accomplishing it as systematically, as methodically as though they had taken a contract to build a Simplon Tunnel or to dig a Panama Canal.

The Germans had held the line from Auberive to the Forest of the Argonne since the battle of the Marne. For more than a year they had been constructing fortifications and

defences of so formidable a nature that it is scarcely to be wondered at that they considered their position as being virtually impregnable. Their trenches, which were topped with sand-bags and in many cases had walls of concrete, were protected by wire entanglements, some of which were as much as sixty yards deep. The ground in front of the entanglements was strewn with sharpened stakes and *chevaux-de-frise* and land mines and bombs which exploded upon contact. The men manning the trenches fought from behind shields of armour-plate and every fifteen yards was placed a machine gun. Mounted on the trench walls were revolving steel turrets, miniature editions of those on battleships, all save the top of the turret and the muzzle of the quick-firing gun within it being embedded in the ground. The trenches formed a veritable maze, with traps and blind passageways and cul-de-sacs down which attackers would swarm only to be wiped out by skilfully concealed machine guns. At some points there were five lines of trenches, one behind the other, the ground behind them being divided into sections and supplied with an extraordinary number of communication



The effect of shrapnel from a French "seventy-five" on a German battery



Battle of Champagne

The German trenches after the firing of the French artillery

trenches, protected by wire entanglements on both sides, so that, in case the first line was compelled to give way, the assailants would find themselves confronted by what were to all intents a series of small forts, heavily armed and communicating one with the other, thus enabling the defenders to rally and organize flank attacks without the slightest delay. This elaborate system of trenches formed only the first German line of defence, remember ; behind it there was a second line, the artillery being stationed between the two. There was, moreover, an elaborate system of light railways some of which came right up to the front line, connecting with the line from Challerange to Bazancourt, that there might be no delay in getting up ammunition and fresh troops from the bases in the rear. No wonder that the Germans regarded their position as an inland Gibraltar and listened with amused complacency to the reports brought in by their aviators of the great preparations being made behind the French lines. Not yet had they heard the roar of France's massed artillery or seen the heavens open and rain down death.

On the morning of September 22 began

the great bombardment—the greatest that the world had ever known. On that morning the French commander issued his famous general order : “ I want the artillery so to bend the trench parapets, so to plough up the dug-outs and subterranean defences of the enemy’s line, as to make it almost possible for my men to march to the assault with their rifles at the shoulder.” It will be seen that the French artillerymen had their work laid out for them. But they went about it knowing exactly what they were doing. During the long months of waiting the French airmen had photographed and mapped every turn and twist in the enemy’s trenches, every entanglement, every path, every tree, so that when all was in readiness the French were almost as familiar with the German position as were the Germans themselves. The first task of the French gunners was to destroy the wire entanglements, and when they finished few entanglements remained. The next thing was to bury the Germans in their dug-outs, and so terrific was the torrent of high explosive that whole companies which had taken refuge in their underground shelters were annihilated. The para-

pets and trenches had also to be levelled so that the infantry could advance, and so thoroughly was this done that the French cavalry actually charged over the ground thus cleared. Then, while the big guns were shelling the German cantonments, the staff headquarters, and the railways by which reinforcements might be brought up, the field-batteries turned their attention to the communication trenches, dropping such a hail of projectiles that all telephone communication between the first and second lines was interrupted, so that the second line did not know what was happening in the first. There are no words between the covers of the dictionary to describe what it must have been like within the German lines under that rain of death. The air was crowded with the French shells. No wonder that scores of the German prisoners were found to be insane. A curtain of shell-fire made it impossible for food or water to be brought to the men in the bombarded trenches, and made it equally impossible for these men to retreat. Hundreds of them who had taken refuge in their underground shelters were buried alive when the explosion of the great French *marmites* sent the

earthen walls crashing in upon them. Whole forests of trees were mown down by the blast of steel from the French guns as a harvester mows down a field of grain. The wire entanglements before the German trenches were swept away as though by the hand of God. The steel *chevaux-de-frise* and the shields of armour-plate were riddled like a sheet of paper into which has been emptied a charge of buck-shot. Trenches which it had taken months of painstaking toil to build were utterly demolished in an hour. The sand-bags which lined the parapets were set on fire by the French high explosive and the soldiers behind them were suffocated by the fumes. The bursts of the big shells were like volcanoes above the German lines, vomiting skyward huge geysers of earth and smoke which hung for a time against the horizon and were then gradually dissipated by the wind. For three days and two nights the bombardment never ceased or slackened. The French gunners, streaming with sweat and grimed with powder, worked like the stokers on a record-breaking liner. The metallic *tang* of the "*soixante-quinze*" and the deep-mouthed roar of the 120's, the 155's, and the 370's, and

the screech and moan of the shells passing overhead combined to form a hurricane of sound. Conversation was impossible. To speak to a man beside him a soldier had to shout. Though the ears of the men were stuffed with cotton they ached and throbbed to the unending detonation. An American aviator who flew over the lines when the bombardment was at its height told me that the German trenches could not be seen at all because of the shells bursting upon them. "The noise," he said, "was like a machine gun made of cannon." Imagine, then, what must have been the terror of the Germans cowering in the trenches which they had confidently believed were proof against anything and which they suddenly found were no protection at all against that rain of death which seemed to come from no human agency, but to be hellish in the frightfulness of its effect. When the bombardment was at its height the shells burst at the rate of twenty a second, forming one wave of black smoke, one unbroken line of exploding shells, as far as the horizon.

Graphic glimpses of what it must have been like in the German trenches during that three

days' bombardment are given by the letters and diaries found on the bodies of German soldiers—written, remember, in the very shadow of death, some of them rendered illegible because spattered with the blood of the men who wrote them.

“The railway has been shelled so heavily that all trains are stopped. We have been in the first line for three days, and during that time the French have kept up such a fire that our trenches cannot be seen at all.”

“The artillery are firing almost as fast as the infantry. The whole front is covered with smoke and we can see nothing. Men are dying like flies.”

“A hail of shells is falling upon us. No food can be brought to us. When will the end come ? ‘Peace !’ is what every one is saying. Little is left of the trench. It will soon be on a level with the ground.”

“The noise is awful. It is like a collapse of the world. Sixty men out of a company of two hundred and fifty were killed last night. The force of the French shells is frightful. A dug-out fifteen feet deep, with seven feet of earth and two layers of

timber on top, was smashed up like so much matchwood."

When the *réveillé* rang out along the French lines at five-thirty on the morning of September 25, the whole world seemed grey; lead-coloured clouds hung low overhead, and a drizzling rain was falling. But the men refused to be depressed. They drank their morning coffee and then, the roar of the artillery making conversation out of the question, they sat down to smoke and wait. Through the loopholes they could watch the effect of the fire of the French batteries, could see the fountains of earth and smoke thrown up by the bursting shells, could even see arms and legs flying in the air. Each man wore between his shoulders, pinned to his coat, a patch of white calico, in order to avoid the possibility of the French gunners firing into their own men. Several men in each company carried small, coloured signal-flags for the same purpose. The watches of the officers had been carefully synchronized, and at nine o'clock the order to fall in was given, and there formed up in the advance trenches long rows of strange fighting figures in their "invisible" pale-blue uniforms, their grim, set

faces peering from beneath steel helmets plastered with chalk and mud. The company rolls were called. The drummers and buglers took up their positions, for orders had been issued that the troops were to be played into action. *Nine-five !* The regimental battle-flags were brought from the dug-outs, the water-proof covers were slipped off, and the sacred colours, on whose faded silk were embroidered "Les Pyramides," "Wagram," "Jena," "Austerlitz," "Marengo," were reverently unrolled. For the first time in this war French troops were to go into action with their colours flying. *Nine-ten !* The officers, endeavouring to make their voices heard above the din of cannon, told the men in a few shouted sentences what France and the regiment expected of them. *Nine-fourteen !* The officers, having jerked loose their automatics, stood with their watches in their hands. The men were like sprinters on their marks, waiting with tense nerves and muscles for the starter's pistol. *Nine-fifteen !* Above the roar of the artillery the whistles of the officers shrilled loud and clear. The bugles pealed the charge. "*En avant, mes enfants !*" screamed the officers,



The battle of Champagne

“When the order to fall in was given, there formed up in the advanced trenches long rows of strange fighting figures wearing steel casques and the ‘invisible’ pale-blue uniforms.”



How the French soldiers round the German trenches during the battle
in Champagne

“*En avant ! Vaincre ou mourir !*” and over the tops of the trenches, with a roar like an angry sea breaking on a rock-bound coast, surged a fifteen-mile-long human wave tipped with glistening steel. As the blue billows of men burst into the open, hoarsely cheering, the French batteries which had been shelling the German first-line trenches ceased firing with an abruptness that was startling. In the comparative quiet thus suddenly created could be plainly heard the orders of the officers and the cheering of the men, some of whom shouted “*Vive la France !*” while others sang snatches of the Marseillaise and the Carmagnole. Though every foot of ground over which they were advancing had for three days been systematically flooded with shell, though the German trenches had been pounded until they were little more than heaps of dirt and débris, the German artillery was still on the job, and the ranks of the advancing French were swept by a hurricane of fire. General Marchand, the hero of the famous incident at Fashoda, who was in command of the Colonials, led his men to the assault, but fell wounded at the very beginning of the engagement, as surrounded by his staff, he stood on the

crest of a trench, cane in hand, smoking his pipe and encouraging the succeeding waves of men racing forward into battle. His two brigade-commanders fell close beside him. Three minutes after the first of the Colonials had scrambled over the top of their trenches they had reached the German first line. After them came the First and Second Regiments of the Foreign Legion and the Moroccan division. As they ran they broke out from columns of two (advancing in twos with fifty paces between each pair) into columns of squad (each man alone, twenty-five paces from his neighbour) as prettily and perfectly as though on a parade-ground.

Great as was the destruction wrought by the bombardment, the French infantry had no easy task before them, for stretches of wire entanglements still remained in front of portions of the German trenches, while at frequent intervals the Germans had left behind them machine-gun sections, who from their sunken positions poured in a deadly fire, until the oncoming wave overwhelmed and blotted them out. It was these death-traps that brought out in the French soldier those same heroic qualities which had enabled him, under

the leadership of Napoleon, to enter as a conqueror every capital in Europe. A man who was shot while cutting a way for his company through the wire entanglements, turned and gave the cutters to a comrade before he fell. A wounded soldier lying on the ground called out to an officer who was stepping aside to avoid him : " Go on. Don't mind stepping on me. I'm wounded. It's only you who are whole who matter now." A man with his abdomen ripped open by a shell appealed to an officer to be moved to a dressing-station. " The first thing to move are the guns to advanced positions, my friend," was the answer. " That's right," said the man ; " I can wait." Said a wounded soldier afterward in describing the onslaught : " When the bugle sounded the charge and the trumpets played the Marseillaise, we were no longer mere men marching to the assault. We were a living torrent which drives all before it. The colours were flying at our side. It was splendid. Ay, my friend, when one has seen that one is proud to be alive."

In many places the attacking columns found themselves abruptly halted by steel *chevaux-*

de-frise, with German machine guns spitting death from behind them. The men would pelt them with hand-grenades until the sappers came up and blew the obstructions away. Then they would sweep forward again with the bayonet, yelling madly. The great craters caused by the explosion of the French land mines were occupied as soon as possible and immediately turned into defensible positions, thus affording advanced footholds within the enemy's line of trenches. At a few points in the first line the Germans held out, but at others they surrendered in large numbers, while many were shot down as they were running back to the second line. As a matter of fact, the Germans had no conception of what the French had in store for them, and it was not until their trenches began to give way under the terrible hammering of the French artillery that they realized how desperate was their situation. It was then too late to strengthen their front, however, as it would have been almost certain death to send men forward through the curtain of shell-fire which the French batteries were dropping between the first and second lines. Nor were the Germans

prepared when the infantry attack began, as was shown by the fact that a number of officers were captured in their beds. The number of prisoners taken—twenty-one thousand was the figure announced by the French General Staff—showed clearly that they had had enough of it. They surrendered by sections and by companies, hundreds at a time. Most of them had had no food for several days, and were suffering acutely from thirst, and all of them seemed completely unstrung and depressed by the terrible nature of the French bombardment.

Choosing the psychological moment when, the retirement of the Germans showed signs of turning into panic, the African troops were ordered to go in and finish up the business with cold steel. Before these dark-skinned, fierce-faced men from the desert, who came on brandishing their weapons and shouting “Allah Allah! Allah!” the Germans, already demoralized, incontinently broke and ran. Hard on the heels of the Africans trotted the dragoons and the *chasseurs à cheval*—the first time since the trench warfare began that cavalry have had a chance to fight from the saddle—sabring the fleeing Germans or driving

them out of their dug-outs with their long lances. But in the vast maze of communication trenches and in the underground shelters Germans still swarmed thickly, so the "trench cleaners," as the Algerian and Senegalese *tirailleurs* are called, were ordered to clear them out, a task which they performed with neatness and despatch, revolver in one hand and cutlass in the other. Even five days after the trenches were taken occasional Germans were found in hiding in the labyrinth of underground shelters.

The thing of which the Champagne battlefield most reminded me was a garbage-heap. It looked and smelled as though all the garbage cans in Europe and America had been emptied upon it. This region, as I have remarked before, is of a chalk formation, and wherever a trench had been dug, or a shell had burst, or a mine had been exploded, it left on the face of the earth a livid scar. The destruction wrought by the French artillery fire is almost beyond imagining. Over an area as long as from Charing Cross to Hampstead Heath and as wide as from the Bank to the Marble Arch the earth is pitted with the craters caused by bursting

shells as is pitted the face of a man who has had the small-pox. Any of these shell-holes was large enough to hold a barrel ; many of them would have held a horse ; I saw one, caused by the explosion of a mine, which we estimated to be seventy feet deep and twice that in diameter. In the terrific blast that caused it five hundred German soldiers perished. At another point on what had been the German first line I saw a yawning hole as large as the cellar of a good-sized apartment house. It marked the site of a German blockhouse, but the blockhouse and the men who composed its garrison had been blown out of existence by a torrent of 370-millimetre high-explosive shells.

The captured German trenches presented the most horrible sight that I have ever seen or ever expect to see. This is not rhetoric ; this is fact. Along the whole front of fifteen miles the earth was littered with torn steel shields and twisted wire, with broken waggons, bits of harness, cartridge-pouches, dented helmets, belts, bayonets—some of them bent double—broken rifles, field-gun shells and rifle cartridges, hand-grenades, aerial torpedoes, knap-

sacks, bottles, splintered planks, sheets of corrugated iron which had been turned into sieves by bursting shrapnel, trench mortars, blood-soaked bandages, fatigue-caps, entrenching tools, stoves, iron rails, furniture, pots of jam and marmalade, note-books, water-bottles, mattresses, blankets, shreds of clothing, and; most horrible of all, portions of what had once been human bodies. Passing through an abandoned German trench, I stumbled over a mass of grey rags, and they dropped apart to disclose a headless, armless, legless torso already partially devoured by insects. I kicked a hob-nailed German boot out of my path and from it fell a rotting foot. A hand with awful, outspread fingers thrust itself from the earth as though appealing to the passer-by to give decent burial to its dead owner. I peered inquisitively into a dug-out only to be driven back by an overpowering stench. A French soldier, more hardened to the business than I, went in with a candle, and found the shell-blackened bodies of three Germans. Clapsed in the dead fingers of one of them was a postcard dated from a little town in Bavaria. It began : " My dearest Heinrich : You went away from us just a year



This crater, seventy feet deep and twice that in diameter, was caused by the explosion of a mine. In the terrific blast five hundred Germans perished



The periscope rifle in the trenches

ago to-day. I miss you terribly, as do the children, and we all pray hourly for your safe return—" The rest we could not decipher; it had been blotted out by a horrid crimson stain. Without the war that man might have been returning, after a day's work in field or factory, to a neat Bavarian cottage, with geraniums growing in the garden, and a wife and children waiting for him at the gate.

Though when I visited the battlefield of Champagne the guns were still roaring—for the Germans were attempting to retake their lost trenches in a desperate series of counter-attacks—the field was already dotted with thousands upon thousands of little wooden crosses planted upon new-made mounds. Above many of the graves there had been no time to erect crosses or headboards, so into the soft soil was thrust, neck downward, a bottle, and in the bottle was a slip of paper giving the name and the regiment of the soldier who lay beneath. In one place the graves had been dug so as to form a vast rectangle, and a priest, his cossack tucked up so that it showed his military boots and trousers, was at work with saw and hammer building in the centre of that field of graves a little shrine.

Scrawled in pencil on one of the pitiful little crosses I read : " Un brave—Emile Petit—Mort aux Champ d'Honneur—Priez pour lui." Six feet away was another cross which marks the spot where sleeps Gottlieb Zimmerman, of the Würtemberg Pioneers, and underneath, in German script, that line from the Bible which reads : " He fought the good fight." Close by was still another little mound under which rested, so the headboard told me, Mohammed ben Hassen Bazazou of the Fourth Algerian Tirailleurs. In life those men had never so much as heard of one another. Doubtless they must often have wondered why they were fighting and what the war was all about. Now they rest there quietly, side by side, Frenchman and German and African, under the soil of Champagne, while somewhere in France and in Würtemberg and in Algeria women are praying for the safety of Emile and of Gottlieb and of Mohammed.

During the three days that I spent upon the battlefield of Champagne the roar of the guns never ceased and rarely slackened, yet not a sign of any human being could I see as I gazed out over that desolate plain on which was being



An ironclad French turret



A wood where a German trench was sheltered and razed by the French "75"

fought one of the greatest battles of all time. There were no moving troops, no belching batteries, no flaunting colours—only a vast slag-heap on which moved no living thing. Yet I knew that hidden beneath the ground all around me, as well as over there where the German trenches ran, men were waiting to kill or to be killed, and that behind the trench-scarred ridges at my back, and behind the low-lying crests in front of me, sweating men were at work loading and firing the great guns whose screaming missiles crisscrossed like invisible express trains overhead to burst miles away, perhaps, with the crash which scatters death. The French guns seemed to be literally everywhere. One could not walk a hundred yards without stumbling on a skilfully concealed battery. In the shelter of a ridge was posted a battery of 155-millimetre monsters painted with the markings of a giraffe in order to escape the searching eyes of the German aviators and named respectively Alice, Fernande, Charlotte, and Maria. From a square opening, which yawned like a cellar window in the earth, there protruded the long, lean muzzle of an eight-inch naval gun, the breech

of which was twenty feet below the level of the ground in a gun-pit which was capable of resisting any high explosive that might chance to fall upon it. This marine monster was in charge of a crew of sailors who boasted that their pet could drop two hundred pounds of melinite on any given object thirteen miles away. But the guns to which the French owe their success in Champagne, the guns which may well prove the deciding factor in this war, are not the cumbersome siege pieces or the mammoth naval cannon, but the mobile, quick-firing, never-tiring, hard-hitting, "seventy-fives," whose fire, the Germans resentfully exclaim, is not deadly but murderous.

The battlefield was almost as thickly strewn with unexploded shells, hand-grenades, bombs, and aerial torpedoes as the ground under a pine-tree is with cones. One was, in fact, compelled to walk with the utmost care in order to avoid stepping upon these tubes filled with sudden death and being blown to kingdom come. I had picked up and was casually examining what looked like a piece of broom-handle with a tin tomato-can on the end, when

the intelligence officer who was accompanying me noticed what I was doing. "Don't drop that!" he exclaimed, "put it down gently. It's a German hand-grenade that has failed to explode and the least jar may set it off. They're as dangerous to tamper with as nitroglycerine." I put it down as carefully as though it were a sleeping baby that I did not wish to waken. As the French Government has no desire to lose any of its soldiers unnecessarily, men had been set to work building around the unexploded shells and torpedoes little fences of barbed wire, just as a gardener fences in a particularly rare shrub or tree. Other men were at work carefully rolling up the barbed wire in the captured German entanglements, in collecting and sorting out the arms and equipment with which the field was strewn, in stacking up the thousands upon thousands of empty brass shell-cases to be shipped back to the factories for reloading, and even in emptying the bags filled with sand which had lined the German parapets and tying them in bundles ready to be used over again. They are a thrifty people, are the French. There was enough spoil of one sort and another scattered over the

battlefield to have stocked all the curio-shops in Europe and America for years to come, but as everything on a field of battle is claimed by the Government nothing can be carried away. This explains why the brass shells that are smuggled back to Paris readily sell for ten dollars apiece, while for German helmets the curio dealers can get almost any price that they care to ask. As a matter of fact, it is against the law to offer any war trophies for sale or, indeed, to have any in one's possession. What the French intend to do with the vast quantity of spoil which they have taken from the battlefields, heaven only knows. It is said that they have great storehouses filled with German helmets and similar trophies which they are going to sell after the war to souvenir collectors, thus adding to the national revenues. If this is so there will certainly be a glut in the curio market and it will be a poor household indeed that will not have on the sitting-room mantelshelf a German *pickelhaube*. After the war is over hordes of tourists will no doubt make excursions to these battlefields, just as they used to make excursions to Waterloo and Gettysburg, and the farmers who own the fields will make their fortune



French soldiers cutting off trousers buttons of German prisoners to prevent them escaping



The thousands upon thousands of empty brass shell-cases with which the battle-fields are strewn are collected and sent back to the factory for reloading

showing the visitors through the trenches and dug-outs at five francs a head.

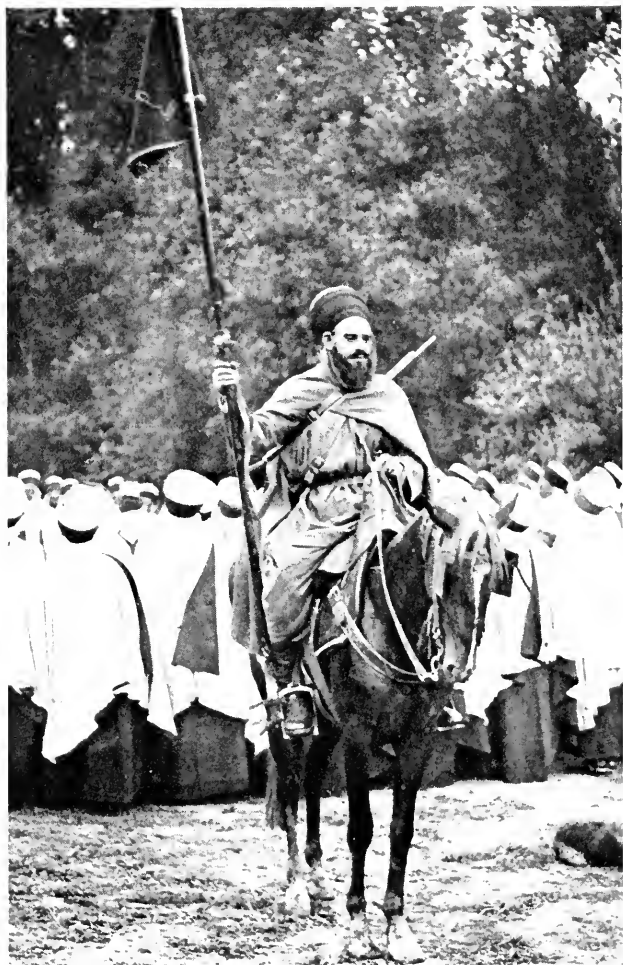
The French officers who accompanied me over the battlefield particularly called my attention to a steel turret, some six feet high and eight or nine feet in diameter, which had been mounted on one of the German trench walls. The turret, which had a revolving top, contained a 50-millimetre gun served by three men. The French troops who stormed the German position found that the small steel door giving access to the interior of the turret was fastened on the outside by a chain and padlock. When they broke it open they found, so they told me, the bodies of three Germans who had apparently been locked in by their officers, and left there to fight and die with no chance of escape. I have no reason in the world to doubt the good faith of the officers who showed me the turret and told me the story, and yet—well, it is one of those things which seems too improbable to be true. As I have already mentioned (p. 135) when I was in Alsace the French officers told me that they found in certain of the captured positions German soldiers chained to their machine guns. There again the inherent improbability

of the incident leads one to question its truth. From what I have seen of the German soldier, I should say that he was the last man in the world who had to be chained to his gun in order to make him fight. Yet in this war so many wildly improbable, wholly incredible things have actually occurred that one is not justified in denying the truth of an assertion merely because it sounds unlikely.

One of the things that particularly impressed me during my visit to Champagne was the feverish activity that prevailed behind the firing-line. It was the busiest place that I have ever seen ; busier than Wall Street at the noon-hour ; busier than the Panama Canal Zone at the rush period of the Canal's construction. The roads behind the front for twenty miles were filled with moving troops and transport-trains ; long columns of sturdy infantrymen in mud-stained coats of faded blue and wearing steel casques which gave them a startling resemblance to their ancestors, the men-at-arms of the Middle Ages ; brown-skinned men from North Africa in snowy turbans and voluminous burnouses, and black-skinned men from West Africa, whose khaki uniforms were brightened by broad red



Mounted on the German trench-walls were revolving steel turrets containing quick-firing guns. When the French captured the turret shown above they found inside it three dead Germans, who, they assert, had been locked in by their officers and left to die.



“ Brown-faced men from North Africa in turbans
and burnouses ”

sashes and rakish red tarbooshes ; sun-tanned Colonial soldiery from Annam and Tonquin, from Somaliland and Madagascar, wearing on their tunics the ribbons of wars fought in lands of which most people have never so much as heard ; Spahis from Morocco and the Sahara, mounted on horses as wiry and hardy as themselves ; Zouaves in jaunty fezes and braided jackets and enormous trousers ; sailors from the fleet, brought to handle the big naval guns, swaggering along with the roll of the sea in their gait ; cuirassiers, their steel breastplates and horse-tailed helmets making them look astonishingly like Roman horsemen ; dragoons so picturesque that they seemed to be posing for a Detaille or a Meissonier ; field-batteries, pale blue like everything else in the French army, rocking and swaying over the stones ; cyclists with their rifles slung across their backs hunter-fashion ; leather-jacketed despatch riders on panting motor-cycles ; post-offices on wheels ; telegraph offices on wheels ; butchers' shops on wheels ; bakers' shops on wheels ; garages on wheels ; motor-buses, their tops covered with wire-netting and filled with carrier-pigeons ; giant searchlights ; water-

carts drawn by patient Moorish donkeys whose turbaned drivers cursed them in shrill, harsh Arabic ; troop transport cars like miniature railway-coaches, each carrying fifty men ; field-kitchens with the smoke pouring from their stovepipes and steam rising from the soup cauldrons ; long lines of drinking-water waggons, the gift of the Touring Club de France ; great herds of cattle and woolly waves of sheep, soon to be converted into beef and mutton, for the fighting man needs meat, and plenty of it ; pontoon-trains ; balloon outfits ; machine guns ; pack-trains ; mountain batteries ; ambulances ; world without end, amen. Though the roads were jammed from ditch to ditch, there was no confusion, no congestion. Everything was as well regulated as the traffic is in the busiest London streets. If the roads were crowded, so were the fields. Here a battalion of Zouaves at bayonet practice was being instructed in the "haymaker's lift," that terrible upward thrust in which a soldier trained in the use of the bayonet can, in a single stroke, rip his adversary open from waist to neck, and toss him over his shoulder as he would a forkful of hay. Over there a brigade of *chasseurs d'Afrique* was



Motor-buses with wire-netting tops filled with carrier pigeons



German prisoners came by, carrying on their shoulders stretchers on which lay the stiff, stark forms of dead men



“ Men were at work rolling up the barbed wire in the captured German entanglements ”

encamped, the long lines of horses, the hooded waggons, and the fires with the cooking-pots steaming over them, suggesting a mammoth encampment of gypsies. In the next field a regiment of Moroccan tirailleurs had halted for the night, and the men, kneeling on their blankets, were praying with their faces turned toward Mecca. Down by the horse-lines a Moorish barber was at work shaving the heads of the soldiers, but taking care always to leave the little top-knot by means of which the faithful when they die, may be jerked to Paradise. A little farther on the huge yellow bulk of an observation balloon—" *les saucisses*," the French call them—was slowly filling preparatory to taking its place aloft with its fellows, which, at intervals of half a mile, hung above the French lines, straining at their tethers like horses that were frightened and wished to break away. In whichever direction I looked, men were drilling or marching. Where all these hordes of men had come from, where they were bound, what they were going to do, no one seemed to know or, indeed, particularly to care. They were merely pawns which were being moved here and there upon a mighty chessboard by a

stout old man in a general's uniform, sitting at a map-covered table in a farmhouse many miles away.

As we made our way slowly and laboriously toward the front across a region so littered with scraps of metal and broken iron and twisted wire that it looked like the ruins of a burned hardware store, we began to meet the caravans of wounded. Lying with white, drawn faces on the dripping stretchers were men whose bodies had been ripped open like the carcasses that hang in front of butchers' shops ; men who had been blinded and will spend the rest of their days groping in darkness ; men smashed out of all resemblance to anything human, yet still alive ; and other men who, with no wound upon them, raved and laughed and cackled in insane mirth at the frightful humour of the things that they had seen. Every house and farmyard for miles around was filled with wounded, and still they came streaming in, some hobbling, some on stretchers, some assisted by comrades, some bareheaded, with the dried blood clotted on their heads and faces, other with their gas-masks and their mud-plastered helmets still on. Two soldiers came by pushing wheeled

stretchers, on which lay the stiff, stark forms of dead men. The soldiers were whistling and singing, like men returning from a day's work well done, and occasionally one of them in sheer exuberance of spirits would send his helmet spinning into the air. Coming to a little declivity, they raced down it with their grisly burdens, like delivery boys racing with their carts. The light vehicles bumped and jounced over the uneven ground until one of the corpses threatened to fall off, whereupon the soldiers stopped and, still laughing, tied the dead thing on again. Such is the callousness begot by war.

Their offensive in Champagne cost the French, I have every reason to believe, very close to 110,000 men. The German casualties, so the French General Staff asserts, were about 140,000, of whom 21,000 were prisoners. In addition the Germans lost 121 guns. Despite this appalling cost in human lives, the distance gained by the French was so small that it cannot be seen on the ordinary map. Yet to measure the effect of the French effort by the ground gained would be a serious mistake. Just as by the Marne victory the French stopped the invasion and ruined the original German plan, which was first to shatter France

and then turn against Russia ; and just as by the victory of the Yser they effectively prevented the nemy from reaching the Channel ports or getting a foothold in the Pas-de Calais, so the offensive in Champagne, costly as it was in human lives, fulfilled its double mission of holding large German forces on the western front and of demoralizing and wearing down the German army. It proved, moreover, that the Allies *can* pierce the Germans provided they are willing to pay the cost.

Darkness was falling rapidly when I turned my back on the great battlefield, and the guns were roaring with redoubled fury in what is known on the British front as "the Evening Hate" and on the French lines as "the Evening Prayer." As I emerged from the communication trench into the high road where my car was waiting I met a long column of infantry, ghostly figures in the twilight, with huge packs on their backs and rifles slanting on their shoulders, marching briskly in the direction of the thundering guns. It was the night-shift going on duty at the mills—the mills where they turn human beings into carrion.

VI. THE CONFLICT IN THE CLOUDS

DAWN was breaking over the Lorraine hills when the French aircraft were wheeled from their canvas hangars and ranged in squadrilla formation upon the level surface of the plain. In the dim light of early morning the machines, with their silver bodies and snowy wings, bore an amazing resemblance to a flock of great white birds which, having settled for the night, were about to resume their flight. All through the night the mechanics had been busy about them, testing the motors, tightening the guy-wires, and adjusting the planes, while the pilots had directed the loading of the explosives, for a whisper had passed along the line of sheds that a gigantic air-raid, on a scale not yet attempted, was to be made on some German town. At a signal from the officer in command of the aviation field the pilots and observers, unrecognizable in their goggles and leather helmets and muffled to the ears in leather and fur,

climbed into their seats. In the clips beneath each aeroplane reposed three long, lean messengers of death, the torpedoes of the sky, ready to be sent hurtling downward by the pulling of a lever, while smaller projectiles, to be dropped by hand, filled every square inch in the bodies of the aeroplanes. From somewhere out on the aviation field a smoke rocket shot suddenly into the air. It was the signal for departure. With a deafening roar from their propellers the great biplanes, in rapid succession, left the ground and, like a flock of wild fowl, winged their way straight into the rising sun. As they crossed the German lines at a height of twelve thousand feet the French observers could see, far below, the decoy aeroplanes which had preceded them rocking slowly from side to side above the German anti-aircraft guns in such a manner as to divert their attention from the raiders.

On an occasion like this each man is permitted the widest latitude of action. He is given an itinerary to which he is expected to adhere as closely as circumstances will permit, and he is given a set point at which to aim his bombs, but in all other respects he may use his

own discretion. The raiders flew at first almost straight toward the rising sun, and it was not until they were well within the enemy's lines that they altered their course, turning southward only when they were opposite the town which was their objective. So rapid was the pace at which they were travelling that it was not yet six o'clock when the commander of the squadron, peering through his glasses, saw, far below him, the yellow grid-iron which he knew to be the streets, the splotches of green which he knew to be the parks, and the squares of red and grey which he knew to be the buildings of Karlsruhe. The first warning that the townspeople had was when a dynamite shell came plunging out of nowhere and exploded with a crash that rocked the city to its foundations. The people of Karlsruhe were being given a dose of the same medicine which the Zeppelins had given to Antwerp, to Paris, and to London. As the French airmen reached the town they swooped down in swift succession out of the grey morning sky until they were close enough to the ground to distinguish clearly through the fleecy mist the various objectives which had been

given them. For weeks they had studied maps and bird's-eye photographs of Karlsruhe until they knew the place as well as though they had lived in it all their lives. One took the old grey castle on the hill, another took the Margrave's palace in the valley, others headed for the railway station, the arms factory, and the barracks. Then hell broke loose in Karlsruhe. For nearly an hour it rained bombs. Not incendiary bombs or shrapnel, but huge 4-inch and 6-inch shells filled with high explosive which annihilated everything they hit. Holes as large as cellars suddenly appeared in the stone-paved streets and squares ; buildings of brick and stone and concrete crashed to the ground as though flattened by the hand of God ; fires broke out in various quarters of the city and raged unchecked ; the terrified inhabitants cowered in their cellars or ran in blind panic for the open country ; the noise was terrific, for bombs were falling at the rate of a dozen to the minute ; beneath that rain of death Karlsruhe rocked and reeled. The artillery was called out but it was useless ; no guns could hit the great white birds which twisted and turned and swooped and climbed a



Fighting in a quarrel that is not his own
A trooper from France's African possessions on duty in the trenches



The first-line German trenches captured by the French in Champagne

The battle-field of Champagne looked as though all the garbage cans in Europe and America had been emptied upon

mile or more overhead. Each aeroplane, as soon as it had exhausted its cargo of explosives, turned its nose toward the French lines and went skimming homeward as fast as its propellers could take it there, but to the inhabitants of the quivering, shell-torn town it must have seemed as though the procession of aircraft would never cease. The return to the French lines was not as free from danger as the outward trip had been, for the news of the raid had been flashed over the country by wire and wireless and anti-aircraft guns were on the look-out for the raiders everywhere. The guarding aeroplanes were on the alert, however, and themselves attracted the fire of the German batteries or engaged the German Taubes while the returning raiders sped by high overhead. Of the four squadriglias of aeroplanes which set out for Karlsruhe only two machines failed to return. These lost their bearings and were surprised by the sudden rising of hawk-like Aviatiks which cut them off from home and, after fierce struggles in the air, forced them to descend into the German lines. But it was not a heavy price to pay for the destruction that had been wrought and the moral effect that

had been produced, for all that day the roads leading out of Karlsruhe were choked with frantic fugitives and the stories which they told spread over all southern Germany a cloud of despondency and gloom. Since then the news of the Zeppelin raids on London has brought a thrill of fear to the people of Karlsruhe. They have learned what it means to have death drop out of the sky.

More progress has been made in the French air service, which has been placed under the direction of the recently created Subministry of Aviation, than in any other branch of the Republic's fighting machine. Though definite information regarding the French air service is extremely difficult to obtain, there is no doubt that on December 1, 1915, France had more than three thousand aeroplanes in commission, and this number is being steadily increased. The French machines, though of many makes and types, are divided into three classes, according to whether they are to be used for reconnaissance, for fire control, or for bombardment. The machines generally used for reconnaissance work are the Moranes, the Maurice Farman, and a new type of small machine

known as the "Baby" Nieuport. The last-named, which are but twenty-five feet wide and can be built in eight days at a cost of only six thousand francs, might well be termed the Fords of the air. They have an eighty horsepower motor, carry only the pilot, who operates the machine gun mounted over his head, and can attain the amazing speed of one hundred and twenty miles an hour. These tiny machines can ascend at a sharper angle than any other aeroplane made, it being claimed for them, and with truth, that they can do things which a large bird, such as an eagle or a hawk, could not do. The machines generally used for directing artillery fire are either Voisins or Caudron biplanes. The Voisin, which carries an observer as well as a pilot, is armed with a Hotchkiss quick-firer throwing three-pound shells, being the only machine of its size having sufficient stability to stand the recoil from so heavy a gun. The Caudron, which likewise has a crew of two men, has two motors, each acting independently of the other. I was shown one of these machines which, during an observation flight over the German lines, was struck by a shell which killed the

observer and demolished one of the motors ; the other motor was not damaged, however, and with it the pilot was able to bring the machine and his dead companion back to the French lines. For making raids and bombardments the Voisin and Breguet machines have generally been used, but they are now being replaced by the giant triplane which has fittingly been called " the Dreadnought of the skies." This aerial monster, the last word in aircraft construction, has a sixty-three foot spread of wing ; its four motors generate eight hundred horse-power ; its armament consists of two Hotchkiss quick-firing cannon and four machine guns ; it can carry twelve men—though on a raid the crew consists of four—and twelve hundred pounds of explosive ; its cost is six hundred thousand francs.

As a result of this extraordinary advance in aviation, France has to-day a veritable aerial navy, formed in squadrons and divisions, with battleplanes, cruisers, scouts, and destroyers, all heavily armoured and carrying both machine guns and cannon firing three-inch shells. Each squadron, as at present formed, consists of one battleplane, two battle-cruisers, and six scout-

planes, with a complement of upward of fifty officers and men, which includes not only the pilots and observers but the mechanics and the drivers of the lorries and trailers which form part of each outfit. These raiding squadrons are constantly operating over the enemy's lines, bombarding his bases, railway lines, and cantonments, hindering the transportation of troops and ammunition, and creating general demoralization behind the firing-line. On such forays it is the mission of the smaller and swifter machines, such as the Nieuports, to convoy and protect the larger and slower craft exactly as destroyers convoy and protect a battleship.

Two types of projectiles are carried on raiding aeroplanes ; aerial torpedoes, two, three, or four in number, fitted with fins, like the feathers on an arrow, in order to guide their course, which are held by clips under the body of the machine and can be released when over the point to be bombarded by merely pulling a lever ; and large quantities of smaller bombs, filled with high explosive and fitted with percussion fuses, which are dropped by hand. It is extremely difficult to attain any degree of

accuracy in dropping bombs from moving aircraft, for it must be borne in mind that the projectiles, on being released, do not at once fall in a perfectly straight line to the earth, like a brick dropped from the top of a skyscraper. When an aeroplane is travelling forward at a speed of, let us say, sixty miles an hour, the bombs carried on the machine are also moving through space at the same rate. Owing to this forward movement combining with the downward gravitational drop, the path of the bomb is really a curve, and for this curve the aviator must learn to make allowance. Should the aircraft hover over one spot, however, the downward flight of the bomb is, of course, comparatively vertical.

The most exciting, as well as the most dangerous, work allotted to the aviators is that of flying over the enemy's lines and, by means of huge cameras fitted with telephoto lens and fastened beneath the bodies of the machines taking photographs of the German positions. As soon as the required exposures have been made, the machine speeds back to the French lines, usually amid a storm of bursting shrapnel, and the plates are quickly developed in the

dark room, which is a part of every aerodrome. From the picture thus obtained an enlargement is made, and within two or three hours at the most the staff knows every detail of the German position, even to the depth of the wire entanglements and the number and location of the machine guns. Should weather conditions or the activity of the enemy's anti-aircraft batteries make it inadvisable to send a machine on one of these photographic excursions, the camera is attached to a *cerf volant*, or war-kite. The entire equipment is carried on three motor-cars built for the purpose, one carrying the dismounted kite, the second the cameras and crew, while the third car is a dark room on wheels. I can recall few more interesting sights along the battle-front than that of one of these war-kites in operation. Taking shelter behind a farmhouse or haystack, the staff, in scarcely more time than it takes to tell about it, have jointed together the bamboo rods which form the framework of the kite, the linen which forms the planes is stretched into place, a camera with its shutter controlled by an electric wire is slung underneath, and the great kite is sent into the air. When it is over that

section of the enemy's trenches of which a photograph is wanted, the officer at the end of the wire presses a button, the shutter of the camera swinging a thousand feet above flashes open and shut, the kite is immediately hauled down, a photographer takes the holder containing the exposed plate and disappears with it into the wheeled dark room to appear, five minutes later, with a picture of the German trenches.

The change that aeroplanes have produced in warfare is strikingly illustrated by the fact that in the Russo-Japanese War the Japanese fought for weeks and sacrificed thousands of men in order to capture 203-Metre Hill, not, mind you, because of its strategic importance, but in order that they might effectively control the fire of their siege mortars, which were endeavouring to reach the battleships in the harbour of Port Arthur. To-day that information would be furnished in an hour by aeroplanes. From dawn to dark aircraft hang over the enemy's positions, spotting his batteries, mapping his trenches, noting the movements of troops and trains, yet with a storm of shrapnel bursting about them constantly. I



A section of machine guns passing through the booty taken from the Germans



French anti-aircraft gun in action against a German aeroplane

"The guns were of the regulation 75-millimetre pattern, but so elevated that the wheels were at the height of a man's head from the ground, the barrels thus being inclined at such an acute angle that, by means of a turntable, the gunners were able to sweep the sky.

remember seeing, in Champagne, a French aeroplane rocking lazily over the German lines, and of counting sixty shrapnel clouds floating about it at one time. So thick were the patches of fleecy white that they looked like the white tufts on a sky-blue coverlet. The shooting of the German verticals (anti-aircraft guns) has steadily improved as a result of the constant practice they have had, so that half the time there are ragged rents in the French planes caused by fragments of exploding shells. So deafening is the racket of the motor and propeller, however, that it is impossible to hear a shell unless it bursts at very close range, so that the aviators, intent on their work, are often utterly unconscious of how near they are to death. It is very curious how close shells can explode to a machine and yet not cripple it enough to bring it down. A pilot flying over the German lines in Flanders had his leg smashed by a bursting shell, which, strangely enough, did no damage to the planes or motor. The wounded man fainted from the pain and shock and his machine, left uncontrolled, began to plunge earthward. Recovering consciousness, the aviator, despite the excruciating pain

which he was suffering, retained sufficient strength and presence of mind to get his machine under control and head it back for the French lines, though shrapnel was bursting all about him. He came quietly and gracefully to ground at his home aviation field and then fell over his steering lever unconscious.

No nervous man is wanted in the air service and the moment that a flier shows signs that his nerves are becoming affected he is given a furlough and ordered to take a rest. So great are the mental strain, the exposure, and the noise, however, that probably twenty-five per cent. of the aviators lose their nerve completely and have to leave the service altogether. The great French aviation school at Buc, near Paris, turns out pilots at the rate of one hundred and sixty a month. The first lessons are given on a machine with clipped wings, known as "the penguin," which cannot rise from the ground, and from this the men are gradually advanced, stage by stage, from machines as safe and steady and well-mannered as riding-school horses, until they at last become qualified pilots, capable of handling the quick-turning, uncertain-tempered broncos of the air. Provided

he has sound nerves, a strong constitution, and average intelligence, a man who has never been in a machine before can become a qualified pilot in thirty days. Since the war began the French air service has attracted the reckless, the daring, and the adventurous from the four corners of the earth as iron filings are attracted by a magnet. Wearing on the collars of their silver-blue uniforms the gold wings of the flying corps are cow-punchers, polo-players, prize-fighters, professional bicycle riders, big game hunters, soldiers of fortune, young men who bear famous names, and other young men whose names are notorious rather than famous. In one squad-rilla on the Champagne front I found a Texan cowboy and adventurer named Hall; Elliott Cowdin, the Long Island polo-player; and Charpentier, the heavyweight champion of France. For youngsters who are seeking excitement and adventure, no sport in the world can offer the thrills of the *chasse au Taube*. To drive with one hand a machine that travels through space at a speed double that of the fastest express train and with the other hand to operate a mitrailleuse that spits death at the rate of a thousand shots a minute; to twist and

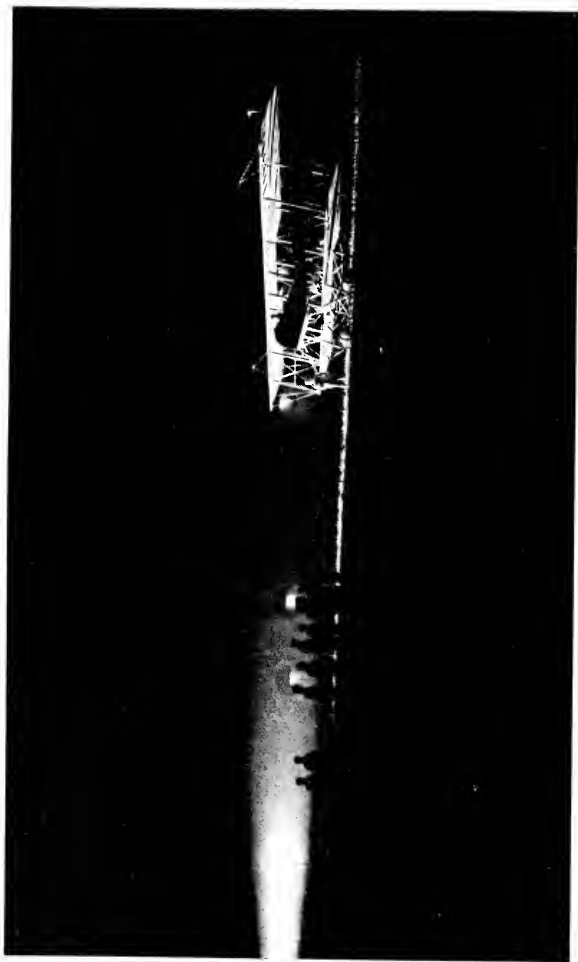
turn and loop and circle two miles above the earth in an endeavour to overcome an adversary as quick-witted and quick-acting as yourself, knowing that if you are victorious the victory is due to your skill and courage alone—there you have a game which makes all other sports appear ladylike and tame.

When an aeroplane armed with a mitrailleuse attacks an enemy machine the pilot immediately manœuvres so as to permit the gunner observer to bring his gun into action. In order to make the bullets “spread” and ensure that at least some of the many shots get home, the gunner swings his weapon up and down, with a kind of chopping motion, so that, viewed from the front of the machine, the stream of bullets, were they visible, would be shaped like a fan. At the same time the gunner swings his weapon gently around, covering with a stream of lead the space through which his enemy will have to pass. Should the enemy machine be below the other, then to get clear he would possibly dive under his opponent in a sweeping turn. By this manœuvre the gunner is placed in a position where he cannot bring his weapon to bear and he will have to turn in pursuit before

his gun can be brought into action again. From this it will be seen that an aeroplane gunner does not take deliberate aim, as would a man armed with a rifle, but instead fills the air in the path of his opponent with showers of bullets in the hope that some of them will find the mark. Should both machines be armed with machine guns, as is now nearly always the case, victory is often a question of quick manœuvring combined with a considerable element of luck. To win out in this aerial warfare, a man has to combine the quickness of a fencer with the coolness of a big game shot.

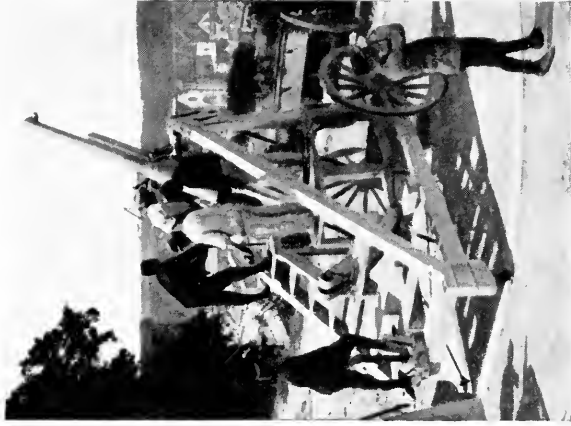
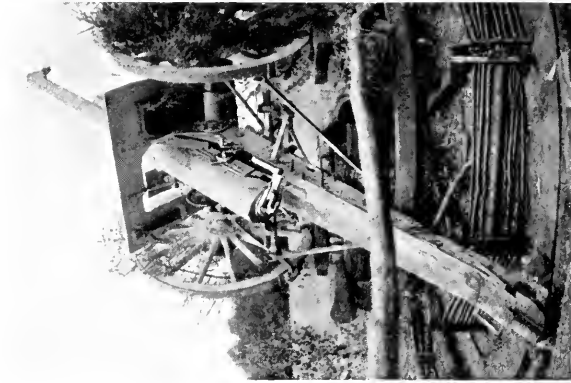
One of the greatest dangers the military aviator has to face is landing after night has fallen. Though every machine has a small motor, worked by the wind, which generates enough power for a small searchlight, the light is not sufficiently powerful to be of much assistance in gauging the distance from the ground. Sunset is, therefore, always an anxious time on the aviation fields, nor is the anxiety at an end until all the fliers are accounted for. As the sun begins to sink into the West the returning aviators one by one appear, black dots against the crimson sky. One by one they come swoop-

ing down from the heavens and come to rest upon the ground. Twilight merges into dusk and dusk turns into darkness, but one of the flying men has not yet come. The four corners of the aviation field are marked with great flares of kerosene, that the late comer may be guided home, and down the middle of the field lanterns are laid out in the form of a huge arrow with the head pointing into the wind, while searchlights, mounted on motor-cars, alternately sweep field and sky with their white beams. Anxiety is written plainly on the face of every one. Have the Boches brought him down ? Has he lost his way ? Or has he been forced from engine trouble or lack of petrol to descend elsewhere ? “ Hark ! ” exclaims some one suddenly. “ He’s coming ! ” and in the sudden hush that ensues you hear, from somewhere in the upper darkness, a motor’s deep, low throb. The vertical beams of the searchlights fall and flood the level plain with yellow radiance. The hum of the motor rises into a roar and then, when just overhead, abruptly stops, and down through the darkness slides a great bird which is darker than the darkness and settles silently upon the plain.



When the chickens come home to roost

It is always a hazardous performance for an aeroplane to make a landing after nightfall, even when the ground is illumined by a searchlight



Anti-aircraft guns posted outside the towns are ready to give a warm reception to an aerial intruder

The last of the chickens has come home to roost.

In addition to the aeroplanes kept upon the front for purposes of bombardment, photography, artillery control, and scouting, several squadrillas are kept constantly on duty in the vicinity of Paris and certain other French cities for the purpose of driving off marauding Taubes or Zeppelins. Just as the streets of Paris are patrolled by gendarmes, so the air-planes above the city are patrolled, both night and day, by guarding aeroplanes. To me there was something wonderfully inspiring in the thought that all through the hours of darkness these aerial watchers were sweeping in great circles above the sleeping city, guarding it from the death that comes in the night. For the benefit of my American readers I may say that the people of the United States do not fully understand the Zeppelin raid problem with which those entrusted with the defence of Paris and of London are confronted. The Zeppelins, it must be remembered, never come out unless it is a very dark night, and then they pass over the lines at a height of two miles or more, descending only when they are above the city

which they intend to attack. They slowly, silently settle down until their officers can get a view of their target and then the bombs begin to drop. This is usually the first warning that the townspeople have that Zeppelins are abroad, though it occasionally happens that they have been seen or heard crossing the lines, in which case the city is warned by telephone, the anti-aircraft guns prepare for action, and the lights in the streets and houses are put out. Should the Zeppelins succeed in getting above the city, the guarding aeroplanes go up after them and as soon as the searchlights spot them the guns open fire with shrapnel. The raiders are rarely fired on by the anti-aircraft guns while they are hovering over the city, however, as experience has shown that more people are killed by falling shell splinters than by the enemy's bombs. Nor do the French aeroplanes dare to make serious attacks until the Zeppelin is clear of the city, for it is not difficult to imagine the destruction that would result were one of these monsters, five hundred feet long and weighing thirty-six thousand pounds, to be destroyed and its flaming débris to fall upon the city. The problem that faces

the French authorities, therefore, is stopping the Zeppelins before they reach Paris, and it speaks volumes for the efficiency of the French air service that there has been no Zeppelin raid on the French capital for nearly a year.

In order to detect the approach of Zeppelins the French military authorities have recently adopted the novel expedient of establishing microphone stations at several points in and about Paris, these delicately attuned instruments recording with unfailing accuracy the throb of a Zeppelin's or an aeroplane's propellers long before it can be heard by the human ear.

For the protection of London the British Government has built an aerial navy consisting of two types of aircraft—scouts and battle-planes. Practically the only requirement for the scouting planes is that they must have a speed of not less than one hundred miles an hour and a fuel capacity for at least a six-hour flight, thus giving them a cruising radius of three hundred miles. That is, they will be able to raid many German ports and cities and return with ease to their base in England. Their small size—they are only thirty feet

across the wings—and great speed will make them almost impossible to hit and it is expected that anti-aircraft guns will be practically useless against them. They will constantly circle in the higher levels, as near the Zeppelin bases as they can get, and the minute they see the giants emerging from their hangars they will be off to England to give the alarm. Their speed being double that of a Zeppelin, they will have reached England long before the raider arrives. Then the new “Canada” type, each carrying a ton of bombs, will go out to meet the Germans. These giant biplanes, one hundred and two feet across the wings, with two motors developing three hundred and twenty horse-power, have a speed of more than ninety miles an hour and can overtake a Zeppelin as a motor-cycle policeman can overhaul a limousine. They are fitted with the new device for ensuring accuracy in bomb-dropping and, with their superior speed, will hang above the monster dirigibles, as a hawk hangs above a hen-roost, plumping shell after shell into the great silk sausage quivering below them.

Both the French and British Governments now have a considerable number of hydro-

aeroplanes in commission. These amphibious craft, which are driven by two motors of one hundred and sixty horse-power each and have a speed of about seventy-five miles an hour, are designed primarily for the hunting of submarines. Though a submarine cannot be seen from the deck of a vessel, an aviator can see it even though it is submerged twenty feet, and a bomb dropped near it will cave its sides in by the mere force of the explosion, particularly if that bomb is loaded with two hundred pounds of melinite, as are those carried by the French hydro-aeroplanes.

But the most novel of all the uses to which the aircraft have been put in this war is that of dropping spies in the enemy's territory. On numerous occasions French and British aviators have flown across the German lines, carrying with them an intelligence officer disguised as a peasant or a farm-hand, and have landed him at some remote spot where the descent of an aeroplane is scarcely likely to attract the attention of the military authorities. As soon as the aviator has landed his passenger he ascends again, with the understanding, however, that he will return to the same spot a

day, or two days, or a week later, to pick up the spy and carry him back to the French lines. The exploits of some of these secret agents thus dropped from the sky upon enemy soil would make the wildest fiction seem probable and tame. One French officer, thus landed behind the German front in Flanders, succeeded in slowly working his way right across Belgium, gathering information as he went as to the resources of the Germans and the disposition of their troops, only to be caught just as he was crossing the frontier into Holland. Though the Germans expressed unbounded admiration for his coolness, courage, and daring, he was none the less a spy. He died before the rifles of a firing-party.

It has repeatedly been said that in this war the spirit of chivalry does not exist, and, so far as the land forces are concerned, this is largely true. But chivalry still exists among the fighters of the air. If, for example, a French aviator is forced to descend in the German lines, either because his machine has been damaged by gun-fire or from engine trouble, a German aviator will fly over the French lines, often amid a storm of shrapnel, and drop a

little cloth bag which contains a note recording the name of the missing man, or if not his name the number of his machine, whether he survived, and if so whether he is wounded. Attached to the "message bag" are long pennants of coloured cloth, which flutter out and attract the attention of the men in the neighbourhood, who run out and pick up the bag when it lands. It is at once taken to the nearest officer, who opens it and telephones the message it contains to aviation headquarters, so that it not infrequently happens that the fate of a flier is known to his comrades within a few hours after he has set out from the aviation field. Perhaps the prettiest exhibition of chivalry which the war has produced was evoked by the death of the famous French aviator, Adolphe Pegoud, who was killed by a German aviator whom he attacked during a reconnaissance near Petite Croix, in Alsace. The next day a German aeroplane, flying at a great height, appeared over Chavannes, an Alsatian village on the old frontier, where Pegoud was buried, and dropped a wreath which bore the inscription : "To Pegoud, who died like a hero, from his adversary."

VII. THE RED BADGE OF MERCY

CORPORAL EMILE DUPONT, having finished a most unappetizing and unsatisfying breakfast, consisting of a cup of lukewarm chicory and a half-loaf of soggy bread, emerged on all fours from the hole in the ground which for many months had been his home and, standing upright in the trench, lighted a cigarette. At that instant something came screaming out of nowhere to burst, in a cloud of acrid smoke and a shower of steel splinters, directly over the trench in which Emile was standing. Immediately the sky seemed to fall upon Emile and crush him. When he returned to consciousness a few seconds later he found himself crumpled up in an angle of the trench like an empty kit-bag that has been hurled into a corner of a room. He felt curiously weak and nauseated ; he ached in every bone in his body ; his head throbbed and pounded until he thought that the top of his skull was coming off. Still, he was alive, and that was something. He fumbled for the

cigarette that he had been lighting, but there was a curious sensation of numbness in his right hand. He did not seem to be able to move it. Very slowly, very painfully he turned his head so that his eyes travelled out along his blue-sleeved arm until they reached the point where his hand ought to be. But the hand wasn't there. It had quite disappeared. His wrist lay in a pool of something crimson and warm and sticky which widened rapidly as he looked at it. His hand was gone, there was no doubting that. Still, it didn't interest him greatly ; in fact, it might have been some other man's hand for all he cared. His head throbbed like the devil and he was very, very tired. Rather dimly he heard voices and, as through a haze, saw figures bending over him. He felt some one tugging at the little first-aid packet which every soldier carries in the breast of his tunic, he felt something being tied very tightly around his arm above the elbow, and finally he had a vague recollection of being dragged into a dug-out, where he lay for hours while the shell-storm raged and howled outside. Toward nightfall when the bombardment had died down, two soldiers, wearing on their

arms white brassards with red crosses, lifted him on to a stretcher and carried him between interminable walls of brown earth to another and a larger dug-out which he recognized as a *poste de secours*. After an hour of waiting, because there were other wounded men who had to be attended to first, the stretcher on which Emile lay was lifted on to a table, over which hung a lantern. A bearded man, wearing the cap of a medical officer, and with a white apron up to his neck, briskly unwound the bandages which hid the place where Emile's right hand should have been. "It'll have to be taken off a bit further up, *mon brave*," said the surgeon, in much the same tone that a tailor would use in discussing the shortening of a coat. "You seem to be in pretty fair shape, though, so we'll just give you a new dressing, and send you along to the field ambulance, where they have more facilities for amputating than we have here." Despite the pain, which had now become agonizing, Emile watched with a sort of detached admiration the neatness and despatch with which the surgeon wound the white bandages around the wound. It reminded him of a British soldier

putting on his puttees. "Just a moment, my friend," said the surgeon, when the dressing was completed, "we'll give you a jab of this before you go, to frighten away the tetanus," and in the muscles of his shoulder Emile felt the prick of a hypodermic needle. An orderly tied to a button of his coat a pink tag on which something—he could not see what—had been scrawled by the surgeon, and two *brancardiers* lifted the stretcher and carried him out into the darkness. From the swaying of the stretcher and the muffled imprecations of the bearers, he gathered that he was being taken across the ploughed field which separated the trenches from the highway where the ambulances were waiting. "This cleans 'em up for to-night," said one of the bearers, as he slipped the handles of the stretcher into the grooved supports of the ambulance and pushed it smoothly home. "Thank God for that," said the ambulance driver, as he viciously cranked his car. "I thought I was going to be kept here all night. It's time we cleared out anyway. The Boches spotted me with a rocket they sent up a while back, and they've been dropping shells a little too close to be pleasant.

Well, s'long. When I get this bunch delivered I'm going to turn in and get a night's sleep."

The road, being paved with cobblestones, was not as smooth as it should have been for wounded men. Emile, who had been awakened to full consciousness by the night air and by a drink of brandy one of the orderlies at the *poste de secours* had given him, felt something warm and sticky falling . . . drip . . . drip . . . drip . . . upon his face. In the dim light he was at first unable to discover where it came from. Then he saw. It was dripping through the brown canvas of the stretcher that hung above him. He tried to call to the ambulance driver, but his voice was lost in the noise of the machine. The field-hospital was only three miles behind the trench in which he had been wounded, but by the time he arrived there, what with the jolting and the pain and the terrible thirst which comes from loss of blood and that ghastly drip . . . drip . . . drip in his face, Emile was in a state of both mental and physical collapse. They took him into a large tent, dimly lighted by lanterns which showed him many other stretchers with silent or groaning forms, all ticketed like himself,

lying upon them. After considerable delay a young officer came around with a notebook and looked at the tag they had tied on him at the dressing-station. On it was scrawled the word "urgent." That admonition didn't prevent Emile's having to wait two hours before he was taken into a tent so brilliantly illuminated by an arc-lamp that the glare hurt his eyes. When they laid him on a narrow white table so that the light fell full upon him he felt as though he were on the stage of a theatre and the spot-light had been turned upon him. An orderly with a sharp knife deftly slashed away the sleeve of Emile's coat, leaving the arm bare to the shoulder, while another orderly clapped over his mouth and nose a sort of funnel.

When he returned to consciousness he found himself again in an ambulance rocking and swaying over those agonizing *pavé* roads. The throbbing of his head and the pain in his arm and the pitching of the vehicle made him nauseated. There were three other wounded men in the ambulance and they had been nauseated too. It was not a pleasant journey. After what seemed to Emile and his companions in misery an interminable time, the ambulance

came to a stop in front of a railway station. At least it had once been a railway station, but over the door between the drooping Red Cross flags, was the sign "Hôpital d'Evacuation No. 31." Two *brancardiers* lifted out Emile's stretcher—the same one, by the way, on which he had been carried from the trenches twenty-four hours before—and set it down in what had been the station waiting-room. It was still a waiting-room, but all those who were so patiently and uncomplainingly waiting in it were wounded. Two women, wearing white smocks and caps and with the ever-present red cross upon their sleeves, came in carrying trays loaded with cups of steaming soup. While an orderly supported Emile's head one of the women held a cup of soup to his lips. He drank it greedily. It was the best thing he had ever tasted and he said so. Then they gave him a glass of harsh, red wine. After that he felt much better. After a time a doctor came in and glanced at the tags which had been tied on him at the *poste de secours* and at the field hospital. "You've a little fever, my lad," said he, "but I guess you can stand the trip to Paris. You'll be better off there

than you would be here." If Emile lives to be a hundred he will never forget that journey. It was made in a box-car which had been converted to the use of the wounded by putting in racks to hold the stretchers and cutting windows in the sides. In the centre was a small stove on which the orderly in charge boiled tea. In the car were fifteen other wounded men. On the journey four of them died. The car, which was without springs, rolled like a ship in a storm. The jolting was far worse than that in the ambulances on the *pavé* roads had been. Emile's head reeled from weariness and exhaustion; his arm felt as though it were being held in a white-hot flame; he was attacked by the intolerable thirst which characterizes amputation cases, and begged for water, and when it was given him pleaded desperately for more, more, more. Most of the time he was off his head and babbled incoherently of foolish, inconsequential things. It took twenty hours for the hospital train to reach Paris, for a great movement of troops was in progress, and when well men are being rushed to the front the wounded ones who are coming away from it must wait. When the

train finally pulled under the sooty glass roof of the Paris station, Emile was hovering between life and death. He had a hazy, indistinct recollection of being taken from the ill-smelling freight-car to an ambulance—the third in which he had been in less than forty-eight hours ; of skimming pleasantly, silently over smooth pavements ; of the ambulance entering the *porte-cochère* of a great white building that looked like a hotel or school. Here he was *not* kept waiting. Nurses with skilful fingers drew off his clothes—the filthy, blood-soaked, mud-stained, vermin-infested, foul-smelling garments that he had not had off for many weeks. He was lowered, ever so gently, into a tub filled with warm water. *Bon Dieu*, but it felt good ! It was the first warm bath that he had had for more than a year. It was worth being wounded for. Then a pair of flannel pyjamas, a fresh, soft bed, such as he had not known since the war began, and pink-cheeked nurses in crisp, white linen slipping about noiselessly. While Emile lay back on his pillows and puffed a cigarette a doctor came in and dressed his wound. “ Don’t worry about yourself, my man,” he said cheerily,

“you’ll get along finely. In a week or so we’ll be sending you back to your family.” Whereupon Corporal Emile Dupont turned on his pillow with a great sigh of content. He wondered dimly, as he fell asleep, if it would be hard to find work which a one-armed man could do.

From the imaginary but wholly typical case just given, in which we have traced the course of a wounded man from the spot where he fell to the final hospital, it will be seen that the system of the *Service de Santé Militaire*, as the medical service of the French army is known, though cumbersome and complicated in certain respects, nevertheless works—and works well. In understanding the French system it is necessary to bear in mind that the wounded man has to be shifted through two army zones, front and rear, both of which are under the direct control of the commander-in-chief, to the interior zone of the country, with its countless hospitals, which is under the direction of the Ministry of War.

As soon as a soldier falls he drags himself, if he is able, to some sheltered spot, or his

comrades carry him there, and with the " first-aid " packet, carried in the breast pocket of the tunic, an endeavour is made to give the wound temporary treatment. In the British service this " first-aid " kit consists of a small tin box, not much larger than a cigarette case, containing a bottle of iodine crystals and a bottle of alcohol wrapped up in a roll of aseptic bandage gauze. Meanwhile word has been passed along the line that the services of the surgeon are needed, for each regiment has one and sometimes two medical officers on duty in the trenches. It may so happen that the trench section has its own *poste de secours*, or first-aid dressing-station, in which case the man is at once taken there. The medical officer dresses the man's wound, perhaps gives him a hypodermic injection to lessen the pain, and otherwise makes him as comfortable as possible under the circumstances. His wounds temporarily dressed, if there is a dug-out at hand, he is taken into it. If not, he is laid in such shelter as the trench affords, and there he usually has to lie until night comes and he can be removed in comparative safety ; for, particularly in the flat country of Artois and

Flanders, it is out of the question to remove the wounded except under the screen of darkness, and even then it is frequently an extremely hazardous proceeding, for the German gunners apparently do their best to drop their shells on the ambulances and stretcher parties. As soon as night falls a dressing-station is established at a point as close as possible behind the trenches, the number of surgeons, dressers, and stretcher-bearers sent out depending upon the number of casualties as reported by telephone from the trenches to headquarters. The wounded man is transported on a stretcher or a wheeled litter to the dressing-station, where his wounds are examined by the light of electric torches and, if necessary, redressed. If he has any fractured bones they are made fast in splints or pieces of zinc or iron wire—anything that will enable him to stand transportation. Though the dressing-station is, wherever possible, established in a farmhouse, in a grove, behind a wall, or such other protection as the region may afford, it is, nevertheless, often in extreme danger. I recall one case, in Flanders, where the flashing of the torches attracted the atten-

tion of the German gunners, who dropped a shell squarely into a dressing-station, killing all the surgeons and stretcher-bearers, and putting half a dozen of the wounded out of their misery. As soon as the wounded man has passed through the dressing-station, he is carried, usually over very rough ground, to the point on the road where the motor-ambulances are waiting and is whirled off to the division ambulance, which corresponds to the field-hospital of the British and American armies. These division ambulances (it should be borne in mind that the term *ambulance* in French means “*military hospital*”) do as complete work as can be expected so near the front. They are usually set up only four or five miles behind the firing-line, and have a regular medical and nursing staff, instruments, and, in some cases, X-ray apparatus for operations. As a rule, only light emergency operations are performed in these ambulances of the front—light skull trepanning, removal of splintered bones, disinfection, and immobilizing of the wounded parts.

At the beginning of the war it was an accepted principle of the French army surgeons

not to operate at the front, but simply to dress the wounds so as to permit of speedy transportation to the rear, for the division ambulances, being without heat or light or sterilizing plants of their own, had no facilities for many urgent operations or for night work. Hence, though there was no lack of surgical aid at the front, major operations were not possible, and thousands of men died who, could they have been operated on immediately, might have been saved. This grave fault in the French medical service has now been remedied, however, by the automobile surgical formations created by Doctor Marcille. Their purpose is to bring within a few miles of the spot where fighting is in progress and where men are being wounded the equivalent of a great city emergency hospital, with its own sterilization plant, and an operating-room heated and lighted powerfully night and day. This equipment is extremely mobile, ready to begin work even in the open country within an hour of its arrival, and capable of moving on with the same rapidity to any point where its services may be required. The arrangement of these operating-rooms on wheels is as compact and ingenious as a Pull-

man sleeping-car. The sterilization plant, which works by superheated steam, is on an automobile chassis, the surgeons taking their instruments, compresses, aprons, and blouses immediately from one of the six iron sheets of the autoclave as they operate. Six operations can be carried on without stopping—and during the sixth the iron sheets are resterilized to begin again. The same boiler heats a smaller autoclave for sterilizing rubber gloves and water, and also, by means of a powerful radiator, heats the operating-room. This is an impermeable tent, with a large glass skylight for day and a 200-candle power electric light for night, the motor generating the electricity. Another car contains the radiograph plant, while the regular ambulances provide pharmacy and other supplies and see to the further transportation of the wounded who have been operated on. Of seventy operations, which would have all been impossible without these surgical automobile units, fifty-five were successful. In cases of abdominal wounds, which have usually been fatal in previous wars, fifty per cent. of the operations thus performed saved the lives of the wounded.

Leaving the zone of actual operations, the wounded man now enters the army rear zone, where, at the heads of the lines of communication, hospital trains or hospital canal-boats are waiting for him. The beginning of the war found France wholly unprepared as regards modernly equipped hospital trains, of which she possessed only five, while Russia had thirty-two, Austria thirty-three, and Germany forty. Thanks to the energy of the great French railway companies, the number has been somewhat increased, but France still has mainly to rely on improvised sanitary trains for the transport of her wounded. There are in operation about one hundred and fifty of these improvised trains, made up, when possible, of the long luggage vans of what were before the war the international express trains. As these cars are well hung, are heated, have soft Westinghouse brakes, and have corridors which permit of the doctors going from car to car while the train is in motion, they answer the purpose to which they have been put tolerably well. But when heavy fighting is in progress, rolling stock of every description has to be utilized for the transport of the wounded.

Those who can sit up without too much discomfort are put in ordinary passenger cars. But in addition to these the *Service de Santé* has been compelled to use thousands of goods and cattle trucks glassed up at the sides and with a stove in the middle. The stretchers containing the most serious cases are, by means of loops into which the handles of the stretchers fit, laid in two rows, one above the other, at the ends of each truck, while those who are able to sit up are gathered in the centre. Each truck is in charge of an orderly who keeps water and soups constantly heated on the stove. Any one who has travelled for any distance in a goods or cattle truck will readily appreciate, however, how great must be the sufferings of the wounded men thus transported. Taking advantage of the network of canals and rivers which covers France, the medical authorities of the army have also utilized canal-boats for the transport of the *blessés*—a method of transportation which, though slow, is very easy. Every few hours these hospital trains or boats come to “infirmaries stations,” established by the Red Cross, where the wounded are given food and drink, and their dressing is looked after,

while at the very end of the army zones there are "regular stations," where the "evacuation hospitals" are placed. Here is where the sorting system comes in. There are wounded whose condition has become so aggravated that it is out of the question for them to stand a longer journey, and these remain. There are lightly wounded, who, with proper attention, will be as well as ever in a few days, and these are sent to a *dépôt des éclopés*, or, as the soldiers term it, a "limper's halt." Then there are the others who, if they are to recover, will require long and careful treatment and difficult operations. These go on to the final hospitals of the interior zone: military hospitals, auxiliary hospitals, civil hospitals militarized, and "benevolent hospitals," such as the great American Ambulance at Neuilly.

No account of the work of caring for the wounded would be complete without at least passing mention of the American Ambulance, which, founded by Americans, with an American staff and an American equipment, and maintained by American generosity, has come to be recognized as the highest type of military hospital in existence. At the beginning of the

war, Americans in Paris, inspired by the record of the American Ambulance in 1870, and foreseeing the needs of the enormous number of wounded which would soon come pouring in, conceived the idea of establishing a military hospital for the treatment of the wounded, irrespective of nationality. The French Government placed at their disposal a large and nearly completed school building in the suburb of Neuilly, just outside the walls of Paris. Before the war had been in progress a month this building had been transformed into perhaps the most up-to-the-minute military hospital in Europe, equipped with X-ray apparatus, ultra violet-ray sterilizing plants, a giant magnet for removing fragments of shell from wounds, a pathological laboratory, and the finest department of dental surgery in the world. The feats of surgical legerdemain performed in this latter department are, indeed, almost beyond belief. The American dental surgeons assert—and they have repeatedly made their assertion good—that, even though a man's entire face has been blown away, they can construct a new and presentable countenance, provided the hinges of the jaws remain.

Beginning with 170 beds, by November 1915 the hospital had 600 beds and in addition has organized an "advanced hospital," with 250 beds, known as Hospital B, at Juilly, which is maintained through the generosity of Mrs. Harry Payne Whitney; a field hospital, of the same pattern as that used by the United States Army, with 108 beds; and two convalescent hospitals at St. Cloud; the staff of this remarkable organization comprising doctors, surgeons, graduate and auxiliary nurses, orderlies, stretcher-bearers, ambulance drivers, cooks, and other employees to the number of seven hundred. Perhaps the most picturesque feature of the American hospital is its remarkable motor-ambulance service, which consists of 130 cars and 160 drivers. The ambulances, which are for the most part Ford cars with specially designed bodies, have proved so extremely practical and efficient that the type has been widely copied by the Allied armies. They serve where they are most needed, being sent out in units (each unit consisting of a staff car, a supply car, and five ambulances) upon the requisition of the military authorities. The young men who drive the ambulances

and who, with a very few exceptions, not only serve without pay but even pay their own passage from America and provide their own uniforms, represent all that is best in American life : among them are men from the great universities both East and West, men from the hunt clubs of Long Island and Virginia, lawyers, novelists, polo-players, big game hunters, cow-punchers, while the inspector of the ambulance service is a former assistant treasurer of the United States. American Ambulance units are stationed at many points on the western battle-line—I have seen them at work in Flanders, in the Argonne, and in Alsace—the risks taken by the drivers in their work of bringing in the wounded and their coolness under fire having won for them among the soldiers the admiring title of “bullet biters.”

The British system of handling the wounded is upon the same general lines as that of the French, the chief difference being in the method of sorting, which is the basis of all medical corps work in this war.

Sorting, as practised by the British, starts at the very first step in the progress of a

wounded man, which is the dressing-station in or immediately behind the trenches, where only those cases absolutely demanding it are dressed and where only the most imperative operations are performed. The second step is the field hospital, where all but a few of the slight wounds are dressed, and where operations that must be done before the men can be passed farther back are performed. The third step is the clearing hospital, at the head of railway communication. Here the man receives the minimum of medical attention before being passed on to the hospital train which conveys him to one of the great base hospitals on the coast, where every one, whether seriously or slightly wounded, can at last receive treatment. To the wounded Tommy, the base hospital is the half-way house to home, where he is cared for until he is able to stand the journey across the Channel to England.

The real barometer of battle is the clearing hospital, for one can always tell by the number of cases coming in whether there is heavy fighting in progress. As both field and clearing hospitals move with the armies, they must not only always get rid of their wounded at

the earliest possible moment, but they must always be prepared for quick movements backward or forward. Either a retreat or an offensive movement necessitates quick action on the part of the Army Medical Corps, for it is a big job to dismantle a great hospital, pack it up, and start the motor-transport within an hour after the order to move is received. It would be a big job without the wounded.

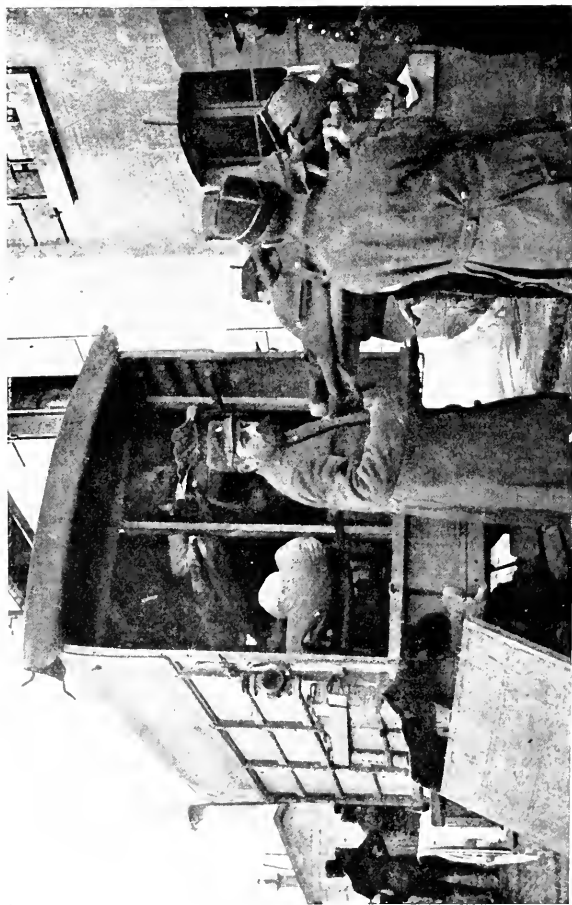
In the French lines the *hôpital d'évacuation* is frequently established in a goods station or warehouse in the midst of the railway yards, so as to facilitate the loading of the hospital trains. This arrangement has its drawbacks, however, for the hospital is liable to be bombarded by aeroplanes or artillery without warning, as it is a principle recognized—and practised—by all the belligerent nations that it is perfectly legitimate to shell a station or railway base in order to interfere with the troops, supplies, and ammunition going forward to the armies in the field. That a hospital is quartered in the station is unfortunate but must be disregarded. At Dunkirk, for example, which is a fortified town and a base



Artois. The underground bedroom of the
French heavy artillery officer



“Two soldiers lifted him on to a stretcher
and carried him between interminable walls
of brown earth to the dressing-station”



Unloading wounded at a hospital in Northern France

"The clearing hospitals must always be ready to receive that unceasing scarlet stream which, day and night, and day, comes pouring in, pouring in."

of the very first importance, there was nothing unethical, from a military view-point, in the Germans shelling the railway yards, even though a number of wounded in the hospital there lost their lives. The British avoid this danger by establishing their clearing hospitals in the outskirts of the terminus towns, and as far from the station as possible, which, however, necessitates one more transfer for the wounded man.

In this war the progress made in the science of healing has kept pace with, if indeed it has not outdistanced, the progress made in the science of destruction. There is, for example, the solution of hypochlorite of soda, introduced by Doctor Dakin and Doctor Alexis Carrel, which, though not a new invention, is being used with marvellous results for the irrigation of wounds and the prevention of suppuration. There is the spinal anæsthesia, used mainly in the difficult abdominal cases, a minute quantity of which, injected into the spine of the patient, causes all sensation to disappear up to the arms, so that, provided he is prevented by a screen from seeing what is going on, an operation below that level may be performed

while the patient, wholly unconscious of what is happening, is reading a paper or smoking a cigarette. Owing to failure to disinfect the wounds at the front, many of the cases reaching the hospitals in the early days of the war were found to be badly septic, the infection being due, curiously enough, to the nature of the soil of the country, the region of the Aisne, for example, apparently being saturated with the tetanus germ. So the doctors invented an antitetanus serum, with which a soldier can inoculate himself, and as a result, the cases of tetanus have been reduced by half. It was found that many wounded men failed to recover because of the minute pieces of shell remaining in their bodies, so there was introduced the giant magnet which, when connected with the probe in the surgeon's hand, unerringly attracts and draws out any fragments of metal that may remain in the wound. Still another ingenious invention produced by the war is the bell, or buzzer, which rings when the surgeon's probe approaches a foreign substance.

Though before the war began European army surgeons were thoroughly conversant with the best methods of treating shell, sabre,

and bullet wounds and the innumerable diseases peculiar to armies, the war has produced one weapon of which they had never so much as heard before, and the effects of which they were at first wholly unable to combat. I refer to the asphyxiating gas. If you fail to understand what "gassing" means, just listen to this description by a British army surgeon :

"In a typical 'gassed' case the idea of impending suffocation predominates. Every muscle of respiration is called upon to do its utmost to avert the threatened doom. The imperfect aeration of the blood arising from obstructed respiration causes oftentimes intense blueness and clamminess of the face, while froth and expectoration blow from the mouth impelled by a choking cough. The poor fighting man tosses and turns himself into every position in search of relief. But his efforts are unavailing; he feels that his power of breathing is failing; that asphyxiation is gradually becoming complete. The slow strangling of his respiration, of which he is fully conscious, at last enfeebles his strength. No longer is it possible for him to expel the profuse expec-

toration ; the air tubes of his lungs become distended with it, and with a few gasps he dies.

“ If the ‘ gassed ’ man survives the first stage of his agony, some sleep may follow the gradual decline of the urgent symptoms, and after such sleep he feels refreshed and better. But further trouble is in store for him, for the intense irritation to which the respiratory passages have been exposed by the inhalation of the suffocating gas is quickly followed by the super-vention of acute bronchitis. In such attacks death may come, owing to the severity of the inflammation. In mild cases of ‘ gassing,’ on the other hand, the resulting bronchitis develops in a modified form with the result that recovery now generally follows. Time, however, can only show to what extent permanent damage to the lungs is inflicted. Possibly chronic bronchitis may be the lot of such ‘ gassed ’ men in after life or some pulmonary trouble equally disturbing. It is difficult to believe that they can wholly escape some evil effects.”

As soon as it was found that the immediate cause of death in the fatal gas cases was acute

congestion of the lungs, the surgeons were able to treat it upon special and definite lines. Means were devised for ensuring the expulsion of the excessive secretion from the lungs, thus affording much relief and making it possible to avert asphyxiation. In some apparently hopeless cases the lives of the men were saved by artificial respiration. The inhalation of oxygen was also tried with favourable results, and in cases where the restlessness of the patient was more mental than physical, opium was successfully used. So that even the poison-gas, perhaps the most dreadful death-dealing device which the war has produced, neither dismayed nor defeated the men whose task it is to save life instead of to take it.

To the surgeons and nurses at the front the people of France and England owe a debt of gratitude which they can never wholly repay. The soldiers in the trenches are waging no more desperate or heroic battle than these quiet, efficient, energetic men and women who wear the red badge of mercy. Their courage is shown by the enormous losses they have suffered under fire, the proportion of military doctors and hospital attendants killed, wounded,

or taken prisoner, equalling the proportion of infantry losses. They have no sleep save such as they can snatch between the tides of wounded or when they drop on the floor from sheer exhaustion. They are working under as trying conditions as doctors and nurses were ever called upon to face. They treat daily hundreds of cases, any one of which would cause a town physician to call a consultation. They are in constant peril from marauding Taubes, for the German air-men seem to take delight in choosing buildings flying the Red Cross flag as targets for their bombs. In their ears, both day and night, sounds the din of near-by battle. Their organization is a marvel of efficiency. That of the Germans may be as good but it can be no better.

In order that I may bring home to you in England and America the realities of this thing called war, I want to tell you what I saw one day in a little town called Bailleul. Bailleul is only two or three miles on the French side of the Franco-Belgian frontier, and it is so close to the firing-line that its windows continually rattle. The noise along that portion of the

battle-front never ceases. It sounds for all the world like the clatter of a gigantic harvester. And that is precisely what it is—the harvester of death.

As we entered Bailleul they were bringing in the harvest. They were bringing it in motor-cars, many, many, many of them, stretching in endless procession down the yellow roads which lead to Lille and Neuve Chapelle and Poperinghe and Ypres. Over the grey bodies of the motor-cars were grey canvas hoods, and painted on the hoods were staring scarlet crosses. The curtain at the back of each car was rolled up, and protruding from the dim interior were four pairs of feet. Sometimes those feet were wrapped in bandages, and on the fresh white linen were bright-red splotches, but more often they were encased in worn and muddied boots. I shall never forget those poor, broken, mud-encrusted boots, for they spoke so eloquently of utter weariness and pain. There was something about them that was the very essence of pathos. The owners of those boots were lying on stretchers which were made to slide into the ambulances as drawers slide into a bureau, and most of them were

suffering agony such as only a woman in childbirth knows.

This was the reaping of the grim harvester which was at its work of mowing down human beings not five miles away. Sometimes, as the ambulances went rocking by, I would catch a fleeting glimpse of some poor fellow whose wounds would not permit of his lying down. I remember one of these in particular—a clean-cut, fair-haired youngster who looked as if he were still in his teens. He was sitting on the floor of the ambulance leaning for support against the rail. He held his arms straight out in front of him. Both his hands had been blown away at the wrists. The head of another was so swathed in bandages that my first impression was that he was wearing a huge red-and-white turban. The jolting of the car had caused the bandages to slip. If that man lives little children will run from him in terror, and women will turn aside when they meet him in the street. And still that caravan of agony kept rolling by, rolling by. The floors of the cars were sieves leaking blood. The dusty road over which they had passed no longer needed sprinkling.



Red Cross men getting wounded out of a bombed town in Flanders
"The soldiers in the trenches are waging no more desperate or heroic battle than these quiet, efficient, energetic men who wear the red badge of mercy".



Bringing in the harvest of the guns

The dripping stretchers slide into the ambulances as drawers slide into a bureau

Tearing over the rough cobbles of Bailleul, the ambulances came to a halt before some one of the many doorways over which droop the Red Cross flags, for every suitable building in the little town has been converted into a hospital. The one of which I am going to tell you had been a school until the war began. It is officially known as Clearing Hospital Number Eight, but I shall always think of it as hell's antechamber. In the afternoon that I was there eight hundred wounded were brought into the building between the hours of two and four, and this, mind you, was but one of many hospitals in the same little town. As I entered the door I had to stand aside to let a stretcher carried by two orderlies pass out. Through the rough brown blanket which covered the stretcher showed the vague outlines of a human form, but the face was covered, and it was very still. A week or two weeks or a month later, when the casualty lists were published, there appeared the name of the still form under the brown blanket, and there was anguish in some English home. In the hall of the hospital a man was sitting upright on a bench, and two surgeons were working

over him. He was sitting there because the operating-rooms were filled. I hope that that man is unmarried, for he no longer has a face. What a few hours before had been the honest countenance of an English lad was now a horrid welter of blood and splintered bone and mangled flesh.

The surgeon in charge took me upstairs to the ward which contained the more serious cases. On a cot beside the door was stretched a young Canadian. His face looked as though a giant in spiked shoes had stepped upon it. "Look," said the surgeon, and lifted the woollen blanket. That man's body was like a field which has been gone over with a disk harrow. His feet, his legs, his abdomen, his chest, his arms, his face were furrowed with gaping, angry wounds. "He was shot through the hand," explained the surgeon. "He made his way back to the dressing-station in the reserve trenches, but just as he reached it a shell exploded at his feet." I patted him on the shoulder and told him that I too knew the land of the great forests and the rolling prairies, and that before long he was going back to it. And, though he could not speak,

he turned that poor, torn face of his and smiled at me. He must have been suffering the torments of the damned, but he smiled at me, I tell you—*he smiled at me.*

In the next bed, not two feet away—for the hospitals in Bailleul are very crowded—a great, brawny fellow from a Highland regiment was sitting propped against his pillows. He could not lie down, the surgeon told me, because he had been shot through the lungs. He held a tin cup in his hand, and quite regularly, about once a minute, he would hold it to his lips and spit out blood. Over by the window lay a boy with a face as white as the pillow-cover. He was quite conscious, and stared at the ceiling with wide, unseeing eyes. “Another shrapnel case,” remarked a hospital attendant. “Both legs amputated, but he’ll recover.” I wonder what he will do for a living when he gets back to England. Perhaps he will sell pencils or boot-laces on the flags of Piccadilly, and hold out his cap for coppers. A man with his head all swathed in strips of linen lay so motionless that I asked if he was living. “A head wound,” was the answer. “We’ve tried trepanning, and he’ll probably

pull through, but he'll never recover his reason." Can't you see him in the years to come, this splendid specimen of manhood, his mind a blank, wandering, helpless as a little child, about some English village ?

I doubt if any four walls in all the world contain more human suffering than those of Hospital Number Eight at Bailleul, yet of all those shattered, broken, mangled men I heard only one utter a complaint or groan. He was a fair-haired giant, as are so many of these English fighting men. A bullet had splintered his spine, and with his hours numbered, he was suffering the most awful torment that a human being can endure. The sweat stood in beads upon his forehead. The muscles of his neck and arms were so corded and knotted that it seemed as though they were about to burst their way through the sun-tanned skin. His naked breast rose and fell in great sobs of agony. "Oh God ! Oh God !" he moaned, "be merciful and take me—it hurts, it hurts—*it hurts me so*—my wife—the kiddies—for the love of Christ, doctor, give me an injection and stop the pain—say good-bye to them for me—tell them—oh, I *can't* stand it

any longer—I'm not afraid to die, doctor, but I just can't stand this pain—oh God, dear God, *won't you please let me die?* ”

When I went out of that room the beads of sweat were standing on *my* forehead.

They took me downstairs to show me what they call the “evacuation ward.” It is a big, barnlike room, perhaps a hundred feet long by fifty wide, and the floor was so thickly covered with blanketed forms on stretchers that there was no room to walk about among them. These were the men whose wounds had been treated, and who, it was believed, were able to survive the journey by hospital train to one of the base hospitals on the coast. It is a very grave case indeed that is permitted to remain for even a single night in the hospitals in Bailleul, for Bailleul is but a clearing-house for the mangled, and its hospitals must always be ready to receive that unceasing scarlet stream which, day and night, night and day, comes pouring in, pouring in, pouring in.

Those of the wounded in the evacuation ward who were conscious were for the most part cheerful—as cheerful, that is, as men can

be whose bodies have been ripped and drilled and torn by shot and shell, who have been strangled by poisonous gases, who are aflame with fever, who are faint with loss of blood, and who have before them a railway journey of many hours. This railway journey to the coast is as comfortable as human ingenuity can make it, the trains with their white enamelled interiors and swinging berths being literally hospitals on wheels, but to these weakened, wearied men it is a terribly trying experience, even though they know that at the end of it clean beds and cool pillows and soft-footed, low-voiced nurses await them.

The men awaiting transfer still wore the clothes in which they had been carried from the trenches, though in many cases they had been slashed open so that the surgeons might get at the wounds. They were plastered with mud. Many of them had had no opportunity to bathe for weeks and were crawling with vermin. Their underclothes were in such a loathsome condition that when they were removed they fell apart. The canvas stretchers on which they lay so patiently and uncomplainingly were splotted with what looked like



“Every house and farmyard for miles around was filled with wounded and still they came streaming in”



“The paths of glory lead——”

wet brown paint, and on this horrid sticky substance were swarms of hungry flies. The air was heavy with the mingled smells of antiseptics, perspiration, and fresh blood. In that room was to be found every form of wound which can be inflicted by the most hellish weapons the brain of man has been able to devise. The wounded were covered with coarse woollen blankets, but some of the men in their torment had kicked their coverings off, and I saw things which I have no words to tell about and which I wish with all my heart that I could forget. There were men whose legs had been amputated up to the thighs ; whose arms had been cut off at the shoulder ; there were men who had lost their eyesight and all their days must grope in darkness ; and there were other men who had been ripped open from waist to neck so that they looked like the carcasses that hang in front of butcher's shops ; while, most horrible of all, were those who, without a wound on them, raved and cackled with insane mirth at the horror of the things they had seen.

We went out from that place of unforgettable horrors into the sunlight and the

clean fresh air again. It was late afternoon, the birds were singing, a gentle breeze was whispering in the tree-tops ; but from over there, on the other side of that green and smiling valley, still came the unceasing clatter of that grim harvester garnering its crop of death. On the ground, in the shade of a spreading chestnut-tree, had been laid a stretcher, and on it was still another of those silent, bandaged forms. "He is badly wounded," said the surgeon, following the direction of my glance, "fairly shot to pieces. But he begged us to leave him in the open air. We are sending him on by train to Boulogne to-night, and then by hospital ship to England." I walked over and looked down at him. He could not have been more than eighteen—just such a clean-limbed, open-faced lad as any girl would have been proud to call sweetheart, any mother son. He was lying very still. About his face there was a peculiar greyish pallor, and on his half-parted lips had gathered many flies. I beckoned to the doctor. "He's not going to England," I whispered ; "he's going to sleep in France." The surgeon, after a quick glance, gave an order, and two

bearers came and lifted the stretcher and, bore it to a ramshackle outhouse which they call the mortuary, and gently set it down at the end of a long row of other silent forms.

As I passed out through the gateway in the wall which surrounds Hospital Number Eight, I saw a group of children playing in the street. "Come on," shrilled one of them, "let's play soldier ! "

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